



A MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. JOSEPH IRONS,

FOR THIRTY-THREE YEARS THE FAITHFUL AND AFFECTIONATE PASTOR OF
THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH ASSEMBLING AT

GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, SURREY,

WHO WAS CALLED TO HIS ETERNAL REST

APRIL 3RD, 1852, IN THE 67TH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

“He was a faithful man, and feared God above many”—NEHEMIAH vii. 2.

CONTAINING

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER

AS A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD, WITH

LETTERS AND OTHER INTERESTING INFORMATION,

COMPILED FROM ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS, AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO THE
LIVING CHURCH OF GOD, BY HIS DEVOTED FRIEND AND BROTHER IN THE LORD,

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1852.



REV. JOSEPH IRONS.

P R E F A C E.

THE Editor feels great pleasure in presenting the following MEMOIR to the Church of God generally, but more especially to that part who were accustomed to worship at Grove Chapel; and frankly confesses, that the pleasure would have been greatly increased if he could by any means persuade himself, in the humble but honest effort he has made, that he had been able to do justice to the memory of this dear departed servant of the Lord, whose *name* and *history* will be dear to him, and thousands, while reason retains her seat. He feels it his duty to state, that the compilation would not have been undertaken by him, but at the urgent and repeated requests of the *dear widow*, supported by some of his brethren in the ministry, who were personally known to, and who greatly respected, the Rev. JOSEPH IRONS, who, with others, were very anxious that the Church of God generally should possess all the authentic information they could obtain respecting him, as so many erroneous reports had gone abroad—have prevailed on the writer to accept the task, on account of the great affection he had for, and the long and close intimacy with, the departed, for a quarter of a century. Most gladly would he have handed over the papers, and resigned the office to one whose pen could have more fully and faithfully developed the character, and described the history, of the late lamented, but highly-gifted and greatly-honoured, PASTOR OF GROVE CHAPEL; but, in the absence of such a friend, he has endeavoured to discharge his trust with fidelity and affection, as in the sight of God. During the period required for the arrangement of the papers, and obtaining the necessary information for the work, he has had much to discourage him in his labour of love, from the weakness of some, and the wickedness of others; but could not allow the scene to close without attempting to lend his humble aid to perpetuate the memory of his invaluable friend and father in the Lord. It is presumed also, that a standing memorial of the usefulness of such a good and truly great man may not be wholly unacceptable to the Church of Christ generally; for it is written, “The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.” Surely his numerous friends, who were accustomed to listen to the proclamation of Divine truth from his lips for so many years, will prize any *fragments*,

be they ever so small, that he has left in his Tent; especially as they will never more listen to his voice, or gather up the crumbs of comfort through his instrumentality.

Under these, with other circumstances, he sends forth this small but sincere token of gratitude and affection to the memory of a valiant and valuable minister of Christ—a bold and unflinching champion of the cross, who did for so many years adorn the doctrines he preached *by a holy life and walk*; for it may be truly said of him, that he “*walked with God, and was not, for God took him*” (Gen. v. 24). The Editor feels persuaded that this Memoir will be received with a degree of pleasure, and read with some profit, by a large number of the *unprejudiced*, who *think and act for themselves*, who so highly prized his services while he remained on earth, and who loved him dearly “for his work’s sake.” It is sent forth on the knee of prayer, that the Lord’s blessing may attend the perusal, and perpetuate his memory in the hearts of thousands, while he is singing in choral lays before the throne of God in glory. That a cloak of Christian charity may be cast over the many imperfections that may have crept into the work, whether editorial or typographical, and if any good be accomplished thereby, he will feel truly grateful to the God of all grace for the same; and consider himself amply remunerated for any pecuniary loss sustained, and for the time and toil occupied in bringing out this Memoir. Satan has tried hard to prevent its publication, and endeavoured to crush it in the bud; therefore it is confidently expected that Israel’s Triune Jehovah intends to put a special blessing upon it, and bring a revenue of glory to His own name thereby.

He would also embrace the present opportunity of thanking those Christian friends who have so cheerfully assisted him in the publication of the Memoir, by obtaining subscribers, or otherwise; hoping that it may be widely circulated, as the produce (above the actual expenses incurred) will be presented, as a small token of brotherly love and esteem, to her who lives to mourn her irreparable loss, and as a proof of fraternal affection to a departed brother and fellow-labourer in the vineyard of the Lord.

Within the veil—near to the throne,
Amid the bright celestial throng,
He gazes on the great THREE ONE,
And swells the Hallelujah song.
No care shall ever pierce his breast,
Nor briny tear bedew his eye;
On Jesu’s bosom he shall rest,
And sing to all eternity.

G. B.

Camberwell Green, September, 1852.

A MEMOIR.

“GATHER up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost,” was the command of the Lord of glory, when upon earth, after the multitude of five thousand had been fed in a miraculous way; and we are informed that they gathered up *twelve* baskets *full*. This text of Scripture came to my mind with some peculiar sweetness, when I heard of the intention of presenting the Church of God with a Memoir of our dear departed friend and brother, the Rev. JOSEPH IRONS, of Camberwell. Under God, he has been for forty-four years preaching Christ Jesus, and feeding the multitude with Christ, the living Head, that “whosoever eateth thereof shall live for ever.” The gospel feast is over through his instrumentality, and his labours are at an end, the multitude have been fed—richly fed; and thousands have returned thanks to the great Master of the feast for such a faithful steward, whose services were so long continued to them. But he is gone! and now, before the throne of God, in high seraphic strains, he swells the chorus of the skies, and casts his blood-bought crown at Jesu’s feet, and gazes on His face. His pulpit he has for ever vacated; but is it not the duty, the privilege, of those who knew him well, to attempt to fill the baskets with the fragments he has left behind? It is written, that “the memory of the just is blessed.” We expect not that the great and noble of this world, will employ their purse to erect a mighty, massive marble monument to the memory of the dear departed saint;

or that the pages of history will record the life of one whose services were so valuable to the Zion of our God. Shall we be censured for gathering together some of the sweet morsels he has left in his study? They are in his own handwriting, and, beyond a doubt, were never intended to be introduced to the blaze of day, or brought before the public eye. They were recorded for his own information, and intended exclusively for his own use; therefore it is hoped, that whatever is penned will be perused with pleasure, and that a mantle of love will be thrown over every imperfection, as he that penned them is not present to correct his own production. Surely we shall not be doing either violence to the departed, or injury to the living, in endeavouring to rescue from oblivion the few fragments which remain now the feast is ended. It were to be desired that Mr. IRONS had left in his study, in due order, all the particulars of his life; a life so useful to the Church of God for so many years, employed as he was declaring all His counsel, as far as it was revealed to his soul. The writer feels assured, *if it were possible* for his dear departed friend to be present while these few feeble lines are written in the form of a memoir, he would say (as he often has said while on earth), "Don't exalt the creature, but exalt Christ;" therefore, his living and dying wish shall be attended to as far as possible. The history of a public character must be valuable, especially of a faithful minister of God, who, from his early days to his hoary hairs, never ceased to preach a precious Christ—a full gospel; making Christ the alpha and omega of all his discourses. And since he writes the substance of his own history, we have reason to believe it to be authentic. We must, therefore, allow him to speak for himself; for, "he being dead, yet speaketh." He states—

"I was born on the 5th of November, 1785, at Ware, in Hertfordshire, and brought up under the care and counsel of a godly father, whom I dearly loved, and one who dearly loved me, the child of many prayers. I was trained up in the nurture and admoni-

tion of the Lord, constantly conducted to a place of worship, taught to read and revere the Bible, and every good example shown me that a godly father could show his offspring. I often felt the truth of what my dear parent brought before my notice; yet how soon it left me, like the dew before the rising sun!

“During my early days, nothing particular transpired more than the youths around us generally meet with. I resided under my father’s roof, and at an early period was instructed in my father’s business—a builder, acting under his direction, and feeling it my duty to assist him therein, having, at that time, not the most distant expectation of following any other profession. I endeavoured to obtain all the information I could, hoping that it would be of use to me in after days. Well do I recollect my dear father saying, as I was leaving his roof, ‘There’s poor Joseph going to that wicked London. My heart bleeds while I bid him good-bye. I fear it will end in his ruin. You will be far away from a father’s eye, and a father’s counsel; but never will I cease to pray for you, that God may preserve and prosper you, although surrounded with all that is wicked.’ Little did he think that the journey would be for my eternal welfare—that the Lord would meet with me in the great metropolis, that ‘I was to be born there.’ In the kind providence of God (and how wonderful are His ways and His dealings with the children of men!) I was brought up to London when about eighteen years of age; and oh, the mercy! A thousand thanks to my God, ‘for His mercy endureth for ever.’ He led me (or I should not have gone) to the Church of St. Mary Somerset, Thames Street, to hear the Rev. W. Alphonsus Gunn, in the year 1803; and while listening to that eloquent and truly faithful preacher of the gospel—a stranger to Christ, to myself, and the minister—the Lord directed the arrow into my conscience, and brought me to a saving knowledge of divine truth; before, a rebel—now, a repenting sinner. O that day—that hour—that place—that preacher! I shall never forget.

‘ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, and forget not all His benefits.’ His love to me, how great !”

It appears that Mr. Irons continued to attend the preaching of his spiritual father as long as Mr. Gunn was allowed to remain on earth. (Mr. Gunn only lived about three years after this period.) The strongest love existed between the spiritual father and his child in the faith ; for one of the most conspicuous features in Mr. Gunn was *his love to his spiritual children*, which is borne out most fully by his letters, which are printed ; and by the account given of him by his biographer. Mr. Irons never spoke of his spiritual father otherwise than “ dear Gunn ;” and generally when he employed the phrase, it was with a smile of approbation, and he constantly carried about with him, until the time of his departure, a slip of paper, about the size of two fingers, containing the heads of a sermon preached by W. A. G., in his own handwriting. But it is not certain whether this was the identical discourse under which he was converted to God ; but one thing is quite certain—he highly esteemed the author of it. He used frequently to show it to his friends, and say, “ Dear Gunn gave me this. I would not part with it for a trifle ; for he was a faithful minister of God. His preaching was eloquent, attractive, persuasive, searching, and experimental ; and, under the power of the Holy Ghost, numbers were born again, and others established.” About three years before Mr. Irons was removed to glory, a friend presented him with a fine old chalk drawing of his dear spiritual father, and Mr. Irons was almost in an ecstasy on receiving such a treasure so unexpectedly ; although valueless to some, so exceedingly valuable to him. This will show the character of the man. He never harboured a hard thought of him who had been so useful to him, and, under God, been the means of converting his soul, and this after a period of more than forty years had elapsed. Although Mr. Irons was a Dissenter from principle, he could not forget his friends in the Establish-

ment. Nay, no two men were ever more highly esteemed by our departed brother than W. A. Gunn and Dr. Hawker. Mr. Gunn, after a short illness, at the early age of forty-five, departed this life on December 5, 1806, and was interred in the church where he had so long preached the pure gospel of Christ to so many hearers.

The poetical pen of Mr. Irons was employed, for the first time, in writing a piece to perpetuate the memory of his spiritual father, and devoted friend:—

“ON THE DEATH OF THE REV. WM. ALPHONSUS GUNN.

“O, CRUEL monster Death! what hast thou done?
 Thou’st torn from my embrace my much-lov’d Gunn.
 Thou hast eclips’d that star which shone so bright,
 And, unexpected, snatch’d him from my sight.
 ’Tis but a short time since he stood forth bold,
 And in one hand God’s terrors he did hold;
 While with the other pointed to the skies,
 He did proclaim a bleeding sacrifice.
 His warning to transgressors did abound,
 And God the Holy Ghost his labours crown’d.
 Stout-hearted sinners fell beneath the word,
 And many souls were brought to know the Lord.
 Rebels grown bold in Satan’s impious ways
 Were made the monuments of sov’reign grace;
 And careless souls, who thought they stood secure,
 Felt the disease of sin, and found the cure.
 The Pharisee, who dress’d himself so gay
 In robes of his own make, from day to day,
 He stript him of his self-wrought righteousness,
 And prov’d it was a worthless ragged dress.
 He preached Christ, the only way to God—
 The only way to ’scape His dreadful rod;
 The only refuge for the soul that faints—
 The only Intercessor for the saints.
 The young of Jesu’s flock with milk he fed,
 And taught their feet in wisdom’s ways to tread.
 He counted them his most peculiar charge,
 And labour’d hard their comforts to enlarge.
 But, ah! he’s gone—his full reward to have;
 Gone quickly from the pulpit to the grave.

A MEMOIR OF

He once delighted in his Lord's employ,
 But now his soul is fill'd with greater joy.
 No more the bold blasphemer will he warn—
 No more the boasting hypocrite he'll scorn;
 No more he'll cheer the Christian's drooping head;
 For now, alas! he's number'd with the dead.
 He now has bid his long, his last farewell,
 And with his Jesus he is gone to dwell;
 There, with the heavenly host he joins to sing
 The praises of his Saviour and his King.
 Ye mourning Christians, dry up all your tears;
 A few more days—at most a few more years—
 And you shall meet your much-lov'd Gunn above,
 And join with him to sing redeeming love.

“J. I.”

About the time of Mr. Gunn's death, it appears our dear brother in the Lord was directed to GATE STREET CHAPEL, where he heard very acceptably the respected minister of that place—the Rev. Griffith Williams. From his own statement his soul was fed with the choicest of the wheat, and the honey out of the rock; he went in and out, and found pasture, and could not help blessing the Lord for His goodness in “raising up pastors after his own heart.” It was not the place, but the truth proclaimed, that was precious to his soul; he was not wedded to the Establishment, although the Lord met with him in a parish church—but where he could get his soul established there he found a home. After hearing him preach for some time, he joined the church under the pastoral care of Griffith Williams; nor did he regret this act unto the day of his death; his pastor was highly pleased with him—the closest intimacy existed between them, and he used to call him “*his Joseph*.” Under his preaching his soul was fed from time to time, and under his counsel and care his steps were directed. While a member at Gate Street Chapel he first felt a desire to open his mouth for God, and to tell others “what God had done for his soul:” having

the love of God shed abroad in his heart, he desired instrumentally to convey it to others—he felt the weight and importance of such a step, and after pausing, and praying, and consulting his dear pastor on this most momentous matter, he was led to the conclusion that God had a work for him to do: and if we follow him through life we find that he was quite correct on this point—he gave ample proof that he did not rush into the work without being sent of God and approved by his fellow-men, especially his pastor. Mr. Irons, speaking of Mr. Williams as his pastor, says, “It was his kind pastoral attention which first induced me to open my mouth at a prayer-meeting; and well do I remember him taking me by the hand in Gate Street Chapel, saying, ‘*I want you young ones to come forward.*’ I confess that I had no power to resist the invitation he so affectionately gave, and for the first time opened my mouth publicly for God, in that hallowed place, in prayer. He was the first to encourage me to blow the gospel trumpet; and when he introduced me to preach my *first sermon*, said, ‘Go in the name of the Lord, and consider the whole world your parish.’ It was this, under God, that encouraged me: to his counsel and advice I feel much indebted; he was ever ready to advise, and could speak from experience; he knew much of the way, and I feel that I cannot be too grateful for his great kindness to me, which continued up to the time of his departure.” It appears from a memorandum, that the Rev. Griffith Williams was called to his eternal rest, July 1st, 1826, aged 71 years; and Mr. Irons preached a funeral sermon on the occasion at Grove Chapel, from Matthew xxi. 8, “Call the labourers, and give them their hire.” Mr. W. had been the faithful and affectionate pastor for a period of thirty-six years, in one part of the Lord’s vineyard, enjoying uninterrupted peace in his charge, and great success attended his labours to the end. He was indeed a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. We find the following with his papers—

"Thou shalt remember all the way that the Lord thy God hath led thee."

"In the month of March, 1808, was the first time I opened my mouth for God, under the sanction of the London Itinerant Society, and by the advice of my pastor, the Rev. Griffith Williams, of Gate Street Chapel. The first place I was requested to preach at, was in a room, over a smith's shop, in the village of Dulwich, Surrey; there I delivered the Lord's message in simplicity, and I trust godly sincerity, as He gave the ability. Surely no man ever felt more of the responsibility of his office than I did at that period. I said, 'Lord, who is sufficient for these things?' Little did I think at that time that in the course of years, after preaching in various places, that my roving feet should be directed to Camberwell—that I should, in the order of Divine providence, in the fulness of time, be the settled pastor at a chapel not then erected, in the Grove, and within two miles of the place where I delivered my first sermon in that *humble upper room*. How wonderful are the ways of God! how mysterious are His leadings! It must be the right way, although to us often a rough path and a circuitous route."

Mr. I. often spoke of this place. The pillar of cloud led him through Camberwell to Dulwich, and years passed away before the same cloud marked his way to Camberwell—in the year 1818, when he found it tarry over it for so many years, in such a conspicuous way.

"I continued preaching in various villages under the patronage of that society, until the close of the year 1809, being actively engaged in business through the week, and walking from ten to twenty miles on the Lord's day, to preach two or three times to the villagers. The remembrance of those walks refresh my spirit while I record them, and calls forth gratitude to God, who led me step by step in the Divine work. My only companions as I walked out to the various places where I had to go, to proclaim God's truth, was my *pocket Bible*, and *its Divine Author*, who often favoured me with the

spirit of prayer on the way, and shed many a ray of Divine light on the inspired page, so that by the time I reached the little companies who used to assemble together in small chapels or hired rooms, I was furnished with a 'Thus saith the Lord;' and often proved that a Divine blessing rested upon it; thus God blessed His own truth through a feeble instrument."

Is it possible to read this narrative without being forcibly struck with the simplicity and sincerity which appear so conspicuous in the few lines descriptive of the humble, but honest, servant of the Most High God, telling out, in love and affection, what the Lord had blessed to his own soul? *Surely he did not run unsent, nor go unprepared.* This put his love to the test—nothing short of love to God and precious souls could have prompted him to such a work; he never forgot it, but frequently spoke of the useful lessons he learned while travelling from place to place under the *London Itinerant Society*. While he was thus employed he met with much to discourage him, beyond the shadow of a doubt; and, blessed be God, he met with much to encourage him, that for nearly two years he constantly went forth sowing the pure seed of the gospel, neither courting the smiles nor fearing the frowns of mortals, feeling fully persuaded that God was with him—His truth could not fall to the ground. And how men's souls were born and benefitted, under his early labours, cannot be fully ascertained until the secrets of all hearts are revealed in that day.

The next document of importance runs thus:—"At the opening of the year 1810, the providence of God removed me from London to Ware, in Hertfordshire, my native town, to assist my father in his business. In this movement of the pillar of cloud, the greatest grief was felt by me at the thought of leaving *my delightful field of village preaching*. But, before I could complete the striking of my tent, I received an unexpected and earnest request to preach in the house of an old itinerant friend at Watton, in Herts, a village within a

walking distance of Ware, which was then utterly destitute of the gospel." Here we have a splendid proof of the interest he took in preaching Christ; to him it was more than his daily food, for although duty called him to his father's residence, yet love to souls led him to pause and pray before he proceeded home to his father's house; he could not willingly give up this (to use his own words) *delightful field of village preaching*, until he heard there was an open door for him at Watton; and, feeling it was the right way, he struck his tent, and followed the pillar of cloud to Ware, where it rested—there did he rest; his eye was constantly kept upon it. How wonderful are the ways of the Lord! Like Israel of old, our dear friend was called to follow the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night—"Yet Israel never lacked any good thing all the way." And every step Jehovah led His servant, our brother, his history proves, "it was the right way;" although, like his namesake of old, he travelled by a rough way, but certainly a right road to *preferment*. It was this that rendered his preaching so profitable to his hearers in after days. He had tasted and handled all he brought before his people from time to time.

But to proceed. He says, "While at Watton the Lord wrought graciously through my poor labours, and gave a proof 'that He had put this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of the creature.' He stirred up a great spirit of hearing at this place. The people flocked together—the Lord applied His word to their precious souls. He did not allow me to work alone, blessings on His name. So many came to hear the word, that soon my friend's house could not receive them. This was truly cheering, and I could not help 'thanking God, taking courage,' and exclaimed, 'What hath God wrought;' and felt secretly persuaded that the step I had taken was of the Lord, and therefore His blessing would surely follow me all my journey through. When the place became too strait for us, a medical

gentleman kindly assisted us by allowing us the use of his *barn*; and, after spending about £20 upon it to make it tenantable, we opened it for the cause of God. Here the people flocked to here the truth, and God smiled upon the labours of the *rustic preacher*. Precious souls were called by Divine grace, and many were fed and comforted under the word amidst hot persecution, chiefly moved by a leading man in the place, whose influence was very great among the godless of the villagers; one who would not enter the kingdom of heaven himself, and those who were entering in he tried to hinder. An Arminian preacher, one very bitter against the pure truth of the gospel, opened a room at his instigation, for the purpose of opposing me. He went from house to house, telling the poor people that I was the greatest curse that God ever permitted to come into that village, because I preached what *he called* Antinomianism. But in this I proved the truth of God's word, 'the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder wilt thou restrain.' God could and did carry on His work amidst the rage of men. Satan grew very angry, but God continued to bless the preached word. About a year and a half I laboured in that station, enjoying the presence of the Lord, and proving that His blessing went forth with His truth, and even the fury of His enemies was made to minister to the furtherance of His designs.

"One remarkable circumstance took place while preaching in the barn. The wife of a thatcher felt a desire to hear me preach, led by curiosity, because there was no small stir made in the village on account of the truths I fearlessly declared. She came, and the Lord was pleased to apply His word with power Divine to her soul; and she gave full proof that it was the work of God and not of man; it was not merely an external reformation, but the work of the Spirit on the soul; so that all who saw it, who knew the Lord, could not help exclaiming, 'What hath God wrought!' The change was so visible, her husband, a most ungodly character,

saw but hated the change, and declared that if she dared to enter the barn again he would kill her. His threats were in vain—the evening came for worship—she went. He said he would take her life from her when she returned if she did. She replied, ‘Will, you may take my life from me, but you cannot take away my religion; I can trust in God, and leave the result with Him.’ Accordingly she went, seeking a blessing, and asking the Lord to protect her from the rage of her godless husband. After the service, she returned to her cottage, but found the door fastened. She obtained a key of a relative which opened it, found her husband asleep, retired to rest, and in the morning he appeared a little calmed down, for the Lord so *chained him* that he did her no bodily harm; and, in the course of time, He so graciously heard and answered prayer, that her husband accompanied her to the barn. Although there was no real proof that he was converted by Divine grace, yet one thing is quite certain, from a bold blasphemer and persecutor he became a constant hearer of the gospel, and a decent, quiet member of society. I record this to show ‘that the power of the Lord was present to heal,’ and can say, ‘Is anything too hard for the Lord?’ No wonder that Satan raged. Oh! what cause for gratitude, that such a weak instrument should be employed, and that God should so abundantly bless my poor labours. He has said, ‘I will work, and who shall let it?’ May this lead me more than ever to thank God and take courage, knowing that He has said, ‘They that honour me I will honour.’ Lord, make bare thine arm, and call poor sinners by thy grace. Oh, let thy work go on. Oh! how many happy Sabbaths I spent at Watton, and how many were profitted under the feeble ministry of His unworthy servant; all which time I laboured, ‘working with my own hands (as did Paul), that I might not be chargeable to any.’ And all this time the Lord was giving me a better education for the pastoral office than I could have obtained at any college in the kingdom.”

How plainly this proves that the "carnal mind is enmity against God." How the pure truth of God gives offence to those who never felt the plague of their own hearts, and consequently know nothing of the Lord our Righteousness; but this is our mercy, while Satan rages, God blesses, truth prevails, sinners' hearts are broken, precious souls are liberated, the triumphs of the cross are extended, and a revenue of Divine praise is ascribed to the Triune Jehovah for his matchless mercy. Our dear friend kept the eye of faith on the pillar of cloud; it was again on the move; the Lord had work for him to do at other places; He would not keep him idle; it was, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard."

Mr. I. states, "Towards the close of the year 1811, I was invited to various surrounding villages to preach, which led, in the course of time, to my receiving an unanimous call or invitation from the Independent church at Hoddesdon, in Hertfordshire, to become their pastor; after prayerful consideration I was led to conclude that it was of the Lord. I therefore replied, informing them that I would, D.V., supply the pulpit for three months *on probation*, as I could not consent to be settled until I saw it was of the Lord. This was agreed to, and arrangements having been entered into, I commenced my labours there on the 1st of January, 1812. God was with me, He did not leave me to work alone; having opened my mouth to preach, He graciously opened the ears of the people to listen, and their hearts to receive His truth; sinners were converted to God; numbers were gathered together; the hungry were fed, and I could not help again exclaiming, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.' At the completion of the *three months* I was again invited to become their pastor; this was a new field opening to me, I dared not now refuse, because I believed it was of the Lord; and yet I trembled to accept it—feeling the great responsibility of such an office. After duly weighing it, and asking advice of God, and God's ministers, to whom I was personally known, I came to the

conclusion I would accept it: I accordingly informed them of my intention, and on the 21st of May, 1812, I was solemnly ordained to the pastoral office, in which sacred and ever-memorable service several of the Lord's dear servants were present, and took part in the same. The principal ministers who officiated were, the Rev. Mr. Cox, of St. Albans, Rev. J. J. Richards, president of Cheshunt College, Rev. Charles Maslin, of Hertford, Rev. John Townshend, of Bermondsey, and the Rev. A. Read, of London, as it is recorded in the Evangelical Magazine for August, 1812."

As we proceed, we find our dear brother is just entering a new sphere of usefulness—no longer the portable preacher, but the publicly-recognized pastor of a body of Christians, meeting together as a church, and organized on New Testament principles; and as we still follow on we discover that the Lord's blessing attends his labours in his new station. Mr. I. must again speak for himself.

"After I had become their pastor, and was throwing all my energies into the work, panting and praying for new births, pleading with God for conversions under the word, the Lord was pleased to hear my cries, and grant my earnest requests; blessings on His holy name, He put a signal honour upon the word of His grace, calling sinners from darkness to His marvellous light, and liberating souls from legal bondage, and bringing them 'into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.' Many now are the living witnesses who can testify of the power that went forth with the word in that little corner—to me a hallowed spot; there also my faith was put to a severe test, both by persecution and privation; Satan grew very angry, but the Lord smiled. The pastoral charge quite demanded all my time and thought, and I was compelled to give up business, in order to throw my whole soul into the work of the Lord, to which *He had called me*. This was a great trial of faith, I found it a hard struggle; indeed, the people over whom I was placed could not support me

and my rising family. To supply their lack of service I opened a school, and by labouring night and day with exertion, such as no man could have sustained, but by supernatural help—I was enabled, by Divine assistance, ‘to provide things honest in the sight of all men.’ ”

Well might Mr. Irons call this a trial for his faith—and I think no person who reads this statement, whose heart is under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, but must fully agree with him. Doubtless Satan tempted him to believe that he had taken a wrong step in accepting the charge of a church that could not provide him with the things of a temporal kind which were absolutely necessary for his use; but as the sequel shows, “God is able to make all grace abound;” and enables His people to chaunt in sacred strains, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” How wonderful are the ways of God! After a dark cloud the sun again appears, and he takes down his harp from the willow, and informs us, “That in a few months the congregation so increased that it became necessary to enlarge the chapel, which was speedily accomplished; and the amount expended in the alterations and enlargement was as promptly collected and paid for, ‘for the Lord gave me favour in the eyes of this people,’ so that no debt remained upon the place: thus we had a larger chapel, and could comfortably accommodate those who attended to hear the word of the gospel, which continued to run very swiftly, though Satan tried all his strength to oppose it, and to prevent my usefulness in the work of the ministry. That cruel foe attempted to crush my usefulness by the agency of false professors, and some who held the truth in unrighteousness. I had much to contend with, but by the help of the Lord I held out and held on, *telling out all the truth of God, and feeling daily the importance of trusting on an Omnipotent arm*; frequently forced to cry out ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ At the close of this year bodily affliction attended me, the Lord saw fit to lay His hand upon me, ‘I was brought low, but He helped me,’ ‘for His mercy endureth for ever;’

I was seized with the TYPHUS FEVER, which so threatened to terminate my labours, that the physician who attended me gave up all hopes of my recovery, and said to my friends as he left my room one evening, that he felt it his painful duty to inform them he thought I could not survive until the following morning, the fever was so very high at that time; upon hearing which, several young *females*, who had been recently called by grace under my ministry, went *privately* into the chapel where they had obtained their second birth, locked themselves in, and continued for a considerable period in earnest prayer to God for the restoration of their pastor. Oh, the power of prayer! and such was the readiness of the covenant God of Israel to answer their petitions, that on the morning when the physician called, and expected to find me a corpse, he to his great astonishment, found me mending, and even craving nourishment. ‘Is anything too hard for the Lord?’ ‘my time was not yet come.’”

This narrative presents to our view two important features worthy our careful consideration—the affection of the people, and the power of prayer. God having blessed the word to the conversion of their souls, they loved the instrument for His work’s sake; and while the Lord poured out upon them the spirit of prayer, how ready was He to answer their petitions—“the prayers of the righteous availeth much.” What encouragement does this afford to the Lord’s tried and tempted people under all their afflictions, to attend to the direction given in His holy word, “Cast thy burden on the Lord, He will sustain thee;” “He never said unto the seeking seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain.” And how gratifying to his flock, especially to those who fled to the Lord in prayer, to find their dear pastor restored in *due time* to them, and enabled to perform that which was required at his hands. Our departed friend would often name this occurrence as an encouragement for pastor and people; he lived in their hearts, and they in his.

“I continued labouring in the vineyard of the Lord

at Hoddesdon until the end of the year 1814, with considerable success attending the preached word, but under great discouragements, arising from various sources, which ‘pressed me out of measure,’ until it became manifest, in the course of time, by a chain of circumstances, that my work was done there. I did not wish to leave, if the Lord had anything for me to do; but I did not wish to stay, unless He had. I desired to look to Him, and still follow the pillar of cloud. It appeared again to move, and the Lord opened another door for me in an unlooked-for manner, and in a place then quite unknown to me. I received an invitation to preach at the village of Sawston, near to Cambridge. I went, and the Lord enabled me to declare His truth, fully and faithfully, to the people, who were *entire strangers* to me, having never seen them before. God was blessing my labours; the people received the word gladly. The prospect was cheering, and this led, in the course of time, to my removal from Hoddesdon to Sawston, early in the year 1815. I felt much in leaving the place, for there were some of the Lord’s people there who were much attached to me, and I to them.”

ACROSTIC.

H	ODDESDON—O dark, benighted place!	}
O	ft has thy vile, degenerate race	
D	espis’d the news of gospel grace.	}
D	estin’d in Christians’ cries to share,	
E	ach day preserved by their pray’r,	}
S	till of thy priv’lege not aware.	
D	ead as thy multitudes remain,	}
O	f thee, some souls are born again,	
N	or has God’s word been preach’d in vain.	}

The Lord says, “My ways are not as your ways, neither are my thoughts as your thoughts.” There are some godly persons now living, whom the Lord gave to him as seals to his ministry at Hoddesdon, and one or more were present to see the last of our dear friend, who are still adorning their profession, and giving a

lively proof of the work of grace in their souls, and that our dear friend did not labour in vain. His removal to Sawston to them was a source of great grief; and some of the letters intended to be inserted in this memoir will show, when he was removed to Hoddesdon, he did not forget the flock he had left behind, nor did he forget his labours there while he remained on earth. Many of the first seals to his ministry were there: indeed, one of his books, dated 1811, contains the following register:—"The names of the spiritual children which God has graciously given me." And then follows the dates, the names, the residences, and the texts preached from in due order, under which they were brought to a "saving knowledge of the truth;" for no man ever loved his spiritual children more than Joseph Irons did. He was constantly on the look out for new births, and ever pleading with the Lord to apply His word to dead sinners, and *would cry out, "Application, Lord. O, Holy Ghost, apply thy word."*

He states, "At Sawston a larger sphere of usefulness opened, and many souls were called by grace out of darkness into God's marvellous light; hungry souls were fed, and, as my success for God extended, the rage of the great enemy of souls increased; and, as usual, he employed some of the old veterans of the Arminian school to be my bitterest persecutors. 'But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known' in that part of His Church; and although *power*, *purse*, and *perfidy* were all employed to evince the enmity of the carnal heart, and show the hatred they have to the grand doctrines of sovereign grace—proving that 'The world, by wisdom, knew not God.' So says His word; and wherever His truth is delivered in its simplicity and purity, the carnal heart is offended, enmity stirs, and persecution follows; yet, blessed be God, those very doctrines which they impugned as leading to licentiousness, were owned of God, to a wonderful extent, in gathering to Himself a godly seed, whose walk and conduct give a lively proof

that grace in the soul will be exhibited in the life, walk, and conversation of those who are the honoured recipients of it."

The following was written upon his birthday, November 5, 1816, and found among his papers; and fully proves that he had a *retentive memory and a reflective mind*. He could not allow the Lord's mercies to him to be buried in oblivion; he therefore records His divine faithfulness, and exults in His loving-kindness. He writes—

" 'Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God hath led thee.' Hitherto the Lord hath helped me. Pause, O my soul! and reflect on the innumerable mercies and sins of the past *thirty-one years*! Born amidst the celestial rays of gospel light, and nurtured by the careful hand of a pious father, but lived eighteen years a stranger to Christ, a captive to Satan, and a slave to the vanities of this world, how rich and sovereign the grace that directed my feet to Saint Mary Somerset Church, Thames Street! Oh, how great, how inestimable the power that spake through *dear Gunn* to my soul! How profuse the mercy which singled out such a rebel as *me* as a monument of everlasting love—making me a recipient of grace divine, separating me from an ungodly world, implanting within my soul a love for the things of God! How condescending is that blessed Spirit which taught me what I was, and testified of a precious Jesus to my soul! How mysterious, wise, and kind, that providential hand which has led me on, from day to day, and has given supplies for all my *real* wants, and kept me from falling away! And oh, what forbearance has my good God displayed, amidst all my pride, sensuality, ingratitude, and rebellion! Often have I forgotten Him, but He has never forgotten me. Often have I forsaken Him, but He *never* will forsake me. Nay, blessed be His holy name, He has said, 'My loving-kindness I will not take from you, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' I look back with gratitude to the last Sabbath in March, 1808, when I preached my first

sermon, and first opened my mouth in public for God, and feel constrained to exclaim, 'Be astonished, O heavens! and wonder, O earth!' that 'unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.' Here I behold the goodness and the sovereignty of God. Destitute of those literary advantages which the ambassadors of Christ in general are favoured with, and, consequently, destined to move in a humbler sphere (but, blessed be God, not the less useful for that); but this treasure being put in so unpolished an earthen vessel, proves, in the most conspicuous manner, that the 'excellency of the power is of God, and not of the creature.' Poverty, persecution, and affliction, have indeed made part of the covenant blessings I have received at the hands of my heavenly Father; but oh, how are they sweetened—yea, forgotten, when I survey the names of *more than twenty*, who, by the instrumentality of my poor labours, God has plucked as brands out of the fire. These I have proof of; they are living witnesses for God, showing what the grace of God produces in the lives of His people. But how many more I know not; oh that it may be an hundred times so many! My God, enable me to dedicate myself afresh to thee, this day—*my natal day*. Take full possession of my heart, rule my affections, guide my future life, destroy my corruptions. *O save me from myself.*"

On the following day he writes thus:—"My Divine Master endured much contradiction of sinners against Himself. Why, then, should I complain of the perverseness of cold-hearted professors, or the lukewarmness of Christians, or the ill treatment I receive from some of my spiritual children, some that the Lord has given me as seals to my ministry? The Lord in mercy pardon them, and give me patience to bear with them, as the Lord *has borne with me*, his humble servant; for it is written, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.' Oh! how often do I offend Him, my precious Redeemer, and yet how

constant His love to me. Oh! for more of the mind of Christ, grace to bear and forbear while pursuing my pastoral duties, that I may *glorify the Lord* in every step I take, and 'endure all things for the elect's sake.' "

About this period Mr. Irons penned the following piece on

LUKEWARMNESS.

"Of all the ills this world has known,
Or woes beneath which mortals groan,
Lukewarmness is the worst!
A direful pestilence on earth,
A very hydra from his birth,
By God and man accursed.

"*Lukewarmness* like a tyrant stands,
Chills the warm heart, binds the strong hands,
And drinks up vigour's stream;
Where'er he reigns within the heart
Chaotic gloom fills every part,
Without a cheering beam.

"*Lukewarmness!* Oh, 'tis death within,
Parent of vice, and nurse of sin,
From whom each crime gains birth.
Oh, where can such a monster dwell?
Shut out of heaven—unknown in hell,
He only lives on earth.

"*Lukewarmness!* Oh, perfidious wretch,
Whose arms, with universal stretch,
Would lay creation waste.
No mortal his fell hand escapes,
But, changing oft his names and shapes,
All are by him disgraced.

"*Lukewarmness!* oh, heart-wounding fact,
Does all the nerves of zeal contract,
And damps the flame of love.
Our closet feelings, temple joys,
And social meetings, he annoys,
Nor lets us soar above.

"Lukewarmness! Worst of Satan's crew—
Cold sermons—and the empty pew,
Do thy grim visage wear.
The slighted closet—barren saint—
The withering church; and pastor faint—
All tell me thou art there.

"Lukewarmness! Oh, it clings to me
Just like the ivy to the tree,
Ah! how it checks my growth.
Sometimes I think I mount on high,
And in the shouts of angels vie;
Anon I sink in sloth.

"Lukewarmness! Oh, consumptive bane,
Shall cure be sought—and sought in vain—
For epidemic woe?
Oh, no! yon fountain open stands,
Whose streams approaching distant lands,
With life and healing flow.

"Lukewarmness! crawling fiend, I hate
His hideous form and wretched state,
And have decreed his death.
I'll flee to Jesus' precious blood,
And plunged beneath that sacred flood,
This foe shall lose his breath.

"Lukewarmness! Oh, my God, destroy,
Let quick'ning influence from on high
Unto my soul be given.
Ye saints, aloud, with me rejoice
That this benumbing, lazy vice,
Cannot exist in heaven."

In the foregoing we find much of the character of the subject of this memoir developed; his zeal for God could not tolerate lukewarmness. Surrounded with trials, and feeling much of his own weakness, he is led to cry out for help and strength, leaning on an omnipotent arm, following hard after his Lord, and panting for greater usefulness day by day in the Church of the living God.

At the close of the same year, 1816, he writes:—

“ Dec. 31. Another year has run its rapid round. Oh, what little progress have I made in ‘ that wisdom which is from above ’—what have I been doing for Him who did and suffered *all* for me?—how cold my devotions—how barren my sermons—how languid my zeal for God and immortal souls—how weak my faith, and how low my expectation! Oh, how unlike a Christian do I live—how sensual my desires, and how little intercourse do I get with Him—how little of my time is *really* spent with and for God—I am truly ashamed of my past years—I am a wonder to myself—‘ a barren tree; ’ and yet Jesus says, ‘ Let it alone this year also ! ’ What cause for gratitude to the God of all my mercies! Lord, forgive the past, and keep me very near to thyself through the coming year, if spared to spend it on earth. Make me what thou wouldst have me to be. Oh, make me an able minister of the New Testament, ‘ rightly dividing the word of truth; ’ lifting up Christ on the pole of the gospel; and enable me to draw to thee souls who are ready to perish. Gracious Husbandman, make me very fruitful in every good word and work. May it be made very clear and manifest, that I am a tree of thy right-hand planting—‘ a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. ’ I bless thee for the grace bestowed through the past. Oh, ‘ hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. ’ Say unto me, ‘ My grace is sufficient for thee. ’ ”

January 5, 1817, he writes thus :—“ Here I raise my Ebenezer. Through many trials, fiery darts, cruel persecutions, the Lord has helped me. Oh, that His past goodness to me may excite present gratitude, and produce future confidence. I have this day preached to the young of my flock at the opening of the new year. They have this day been affectionately and earnestly exhorted to seek Divine guidance. May the Lord the Spirit guide them into all truth, and cause His word to reach their hearts. Oh, that I may win *young souls* to Christ, and gather in the lambs to his fold. Lord, smile upon my labours to-day—water the

seed with thy own Divine dew—cause it to take root, and spring up a seed to serve thee.”

It appears our dear brother was accustomed to preach to the young at fixed periods, from the first of his being settled as a pastor; and those who heard him can bear testimony to the fact, that this was continued to the very last, twice every year, viz., on the evening of the first Sabbath in January and also on Whitsunday. God blessed his labours on these occasions to a wonderful extent; many, very many, of the young of his flock were called under these discourses, which greatly encouraged him to perpetuate them while he could hold up his voice for God. What a mercy to be called by grace in the morning of youth, to devote our whole life to God! employing all our energies in his cause. It soon became apparent that our dear friend's boldness in the proclamation of the truth, his zeal for God, his telling *all out* in the most unreserved way, gave great offence to many, who were constantly using hard speeches, and employing the tongue of slander against him; and nothing short of the grace of God could have kept him faithful amidst the furious opposition he had to contend with. How true is that text, “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” His faithfulness cost him much, from professor and profane. It was with him as with Paul of old, “some cried one thing and some another.” The devil is never at a loss for agents; he need not advertize for them, he has plenty in every county, town, village, and hamlet, and surely those in a religious garb do the most mischief. It is not simply preaching that offends the old serpent, but God's truth fully told out, that which Jehovah deigns to put a blessing upon, plucking souls from his kingdom, and training them up for glory.

Feb. 16, 1817, Mr. Irons writes as follows:—“Precious Redeemer, thou hast said thy disciples shall suffer persecution, and that ‘in the world they shall have tribulation,’ but thou hast promised also, that ‘no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper, and

every tongue that rises against them thou shalt condemn.' Blessed be thy name, thou hast this day made thy word spirit and life to my soul; and though the tongue of slander has been cruelly employed against me, thou hast graciously borne me above it, and sweetly refreshed my soul with thy Divine presence, producing joy and peace within. My foes are many, but they are all under the control of my heavenly Friend, with a 'thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.'"

After Mr. Irons had been removed, in the providence of God, from Hoddesdon to Sawston, many of his dear friends, some of whom had been brought to a saving knowledge of the truth under his ministry at Hoddesdon, corresponded with him. They appear to have felt the loss of a faithful pastor; and he manifested that his love to them was not abated, although distance was the *great gulf fixed* in the way between them; as often as circumstances would permit he would drop them a line, and endeavour to comfort their souls by filling his letters as full of gospel truth as he could, so that each was like a short sermon, to cheer and guide them in the path that leads to eternal bliss. They were not written to public characters, but principally to his spiritual children, who asked counsel and guidance at his hands; and they were not written for the press, but for private use. A few shall be introduced before we proceed further with his history.

December 30, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I received your letter, and perused it with a mixed sensation of pleasure and sorrow. The apology you make for your apparent abrupt manner of leaving me, is altogether unnecessary, because the feelings which forbade a more formal farewell were mutual, and proved the reality of that Divine principle which produces them—viz., the grace of God in our hearts. But I will not proceed to re-open that wound which, I perceive by your letter, is partly healed; and although you have drooped your boughs a little by transplanting, I hope that you will strike deeper root. You have, doubtless, experienced something of that which the Psalmist speaks of—"I was brought low, and He helped me." Nor is this the

first time that you and I have proved the faithfulness of our covenant God; and yet such is the treachery of our hearts, that the next wind of adversity that blows upon us will shake our confidence in Him, and cause us to act (as you very justly state in your letter to me,) very unlike Christians. I think if anything could provoke our very indulgent Father to desert us, our distrust of His kindness would. Were we to act so to an earthly friend, it would soon wean the strongest affection, and chill the warmest love. But oh! amazing love, notwithstanding all our murmurings, ingratitude, and coldness toward Him, "His loving-kindness He will not take from us, nor suffer His faithfulness to fail." Oh, that a view of His long-suffering and forbearance toward us may melt us into a cheerful submission to His disposal! Allow me, dear friend, as it draws towards the close of the year, to exhort you to imitate the conduct of the tradesman—to "TAKE STOCK." Perhaps it will occupy a leisure hour, and afford some encouragement to your mind. Suppose that you begin with *Retrospection*. I think you will find it good to look back to the hole of the pit whence you were digged; for it is not long since you were so poor, that if one single mite of holiness would have bought heaven, you could not have made the purchase—so insolvent, that all the world could not liquidate your debt—so very ragged, that your very appearance would have disgraced the celestial world—so polluted, that an ocean of moral duties and religious services could not have cleansed you—so deranged, that you called darkness light, and light darkness; you dwelt among those who were dead in trespasses and sins, nor could any man bind you; in a word, you were so diseased, that no human skill could cure you, and eternal misery the only prospect that lay before you. Now, proceed to investigate your present state; look over your day-book, *Experience*; survey your store-house, the *Covenant*; peruse your *Inventory*, the Bible; consult your *Clerk*, *Conscience*; and I think you will find cause for gratitude. What says your day-book? Does it not testify that you are cured of your deadly maladies by the balm of Gilead—that the Good Physician has brought you to your right mind—that the blood of your best Friend (who is still living,) has cleansed you from all the pollution of sin—that you are now clothed in a robe that all heaven admires, and in which you will outshine angels—and that a holy principle is imparted to your soul, by which you are enabled to keep up a gainful commerce with the heavenly country? "For godliness is profitable to all things." But turn your attention awhile from your day-book to your store-house, and there survey your wealth. Here is food, fruit, and riches in abundance. Be not satisfied with a transient survey, but examine minutely into its various departments, and you will discover here a magazine of wisdom, there a magazine of strength—here a maga-

zine of comfort, there a magazine of grace, besides vast stores of bread and wine, milk and honey, and at the furthest end a magazine of glory (but this is not unlocked yet). Mark well that great pearl of great price in the centre; 'tis yours. You may gaze upon it, and admire its lustre, you may wear it as your chief—*your only—ornament*, but you can never estimate its value; it has purchased your soul, which is of more value than worlds—yea, it has purchased heaven for you, which all the world could not have done. Moreover, you will find a few rough things interspersed with your stores—something like sorrows. Do not despise them; you are not aware of their value; rough as they appear, they are very healthful in this wilderness country—so much so, that I am apprehensive that you and I should go into a decline without them. Mark well the security of your store-house; its walls are invincible, its gates are barred with unchangeable decrees, and Jesus, thy Friend, the only door by which admittance can be gained, or through which its treasures can pass. Having taken a cursory view of your store-house, peruse your inventory; and here, methinks, the first thing that presents itself to your view is a receipt in full of all demands, signed by the *great Eternal Three-One Jehovah*, including all your debts, past, present, and future, and accepted in the court of Divine Justice. Closely annexed thereto is a long catalogue of very valuable articles, such as *Justification, Sanctification, Adoption, Preservation, Perseverance, Defence, Conquest, Triumph, Eternal Life, &c.* And these are thickly interleaved with promissory-notes, all of which you are at liberty to send up to the *Bank of Heaven* by your indefatigable messenger, Prayer, and may confidently await his return with the full amount of their contents; for there is not a want that you can experience, nor a demand that can be made upon you by Law or Justice, but your Banker is ready to meet; “for in Him all fulness dwells, and from Him we have all received grace for grace.” Search your *Inventory* a little further, and you will find that it contains some very valuable documents relative to your trade, your health, your journey, and your home; you will do well to read it diligently, and peruse it very attentively. *But I need not press this upon you*, because I know it is your delight. I shall therefore proceed to advise you to consult your Clerk, and bid him be faithful to his office; and I doubt not but that he will testify that, although you have met with some opposition since you have been a spiritual merchant, yet you have sustained no loss; although you have been called to endure some hardships, yet you have always had Divine support. He will tell you that you have frequently forfeited your all, yet you have “lacked no good thing.” He will remind you that all your complaints of poverty are owing to your remissness in surveying your store; yea, he will openly declare that your income would be

greater if you were more industrious in your spiritual commerce. Do not be offended with him for his plainness, even if he rebuke you to your face, as he often has done me. He is a *honest fellow*, but he is often very ill-treated; and I am fully convinced that if he was more frequently consulted, and more confidence placed in him, our trade would go on much better, and our funds of joy and peace would daily increase.

Thus far we have attended to *retrospection* and investigation; and as you know I like three heads to my sermon, let us proceed to *Prospect*. And here you will need the help of your *telescope*, *Faith*, by which you may view distant objects in a very familiar way; and I hope the sight will do you good. But here a caution is necessary—be careful to keep the end of your telescope above those mountains of unbelief, or they will obstruct your view; but, by looking above them, you may see to the end of the desert through which you have to pass. Probably you will perceive that the way is strewn with thorns. Fear not; they will only (like so many goads,) make you travel the quicker. Above you is the Sun of Righteousness, but sometimes clouds will intervene; but, remember, they are only flying vapours. Around you may be hosts of enemies; but with you is an Almighty Guard, who will never leave you—no, nor ever forsake you. At the end of your journey stands a messenger waiting to receive you, and to conduct you home. His form is rather terrific, but do not fear him; his hand is rather cold, but do not dread it; look at him closely, and you will perceive that he has no sting; he only waits to perform a kind office, appointed by your heavenly Father. Now lift your telescope a little higher, and above all this you will discover a most delightful country—“even an heavenly one”—a beautiful description of which is given in your *Inventory*. Near the King's Palace is a mansion prepared by Himself—a crown too glorious to be beheld with mortal eyes, and pleasure connected with it that can never be subject to annoyance; all of which, allow me to say, that you are born heir to, and cannot be wronged of—all secure. After having thus taken your stock, I think, my dear friend, that you will not find yourself any worse off at the Christmas of 1815 than at any former period. Allow me, therefore, to conclude, by exhorting you to cultivate a more intimate and extensive commerce with that country from where you have derived all your wealth. Place much more confidence in your clerk, let your messenger be constantly employed, and very frequently survey your store-house; visit your Banker daily, and also read your *Inventory*. And may the King of kings often deign to visit you; may the Sun of Righteousness constantly shine upon you; may your fund of grace and comfort daily increase, until the magazine of glory be unlocked, and your astonished

soul be put in possession of all the joys of heaven, is the constant and fervent prayer of

Your affectionate, though unworthy Pastor,
J. IRONS.

January 18, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The concern which I feel in your present and eternal welfare, induces me to take up my pen to address a few lines to you; and I hope that you will overlook the sameness of my epistles, as you know I have but one subject upon which I delight to dwell—that is, *Jesus, the Friend of sinners*; and as I know you love Him, I trust you will be as well pleased to hear of Him, as I shall be to speak of Him. But oh! where shall I begin? Shall I speak of His person? He is altogether lovely. Shall I speak of His offices? They display, in the most striking way and manner, all the perfections of Deity. Shall I speak of His loving-kindness? It surpasseth both language and thought. Shall I speak of His sufferings? They were the most exquisite, but meritorious. Shall I speak of His victories? They are the most complete and decisive; for “His own arm brought salvation, and His fury upheld Him.” The Jews could not withstand His word and power; Justice could not withstand His merits; nor could our stubborn hearts withstand His grace. Shall I speak of His glory? It dazzles the countenances of angels, and irradiates heaven with its lustre. Or, shall I speak of the manifestation of His love to the heart of poor sinners? Here, I trust, I shall be within the ken of your mind; and will, therefore, dwell a little on this delightful theme. All experimental religion may be reduced (or, rather, increased) to these two points—“Receiving Jesus, and walking in Him” (Col. ii. 6). But certain I am, that you and I should never have received Him, if He had not first taught us, and made us feel our wretched and miserable condition without Him. We were, by nature, so full of love to sin, the world, and self, that, like the inn at Bethlehem, we had no room for Christ. Pause, my dear friend, and admire that amazing love and long-suffering which endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself from our perverse hearts, and adore the riches of His divine grace, who would not take our denial, but sweetly constrained us to open our hearts, and entertain the Saviour. What a time of love was that, when He first enabled us to receive Him as our Surety, to stand between our guilty souls and offended justice—when He opened our eyes to behold His bleeding side, and exclaimed, in accents more melodious than Gabriel’s song or harp, “PARDON, PARDON, PARDON,” *for you!* How Satan was

disappointed! and how our souls were enamoured with His charms! What a display of power was that which dethroned Satan from our hearts, cast down our high thoughts and imaginations, asserted His right as God and King, and enabled us to receive Him as such! Oh! how gentle is His sceptre, and how mild His laws! how equitable His government! how happy are all His subjects! and how eternally glorious and immovable His throne!

Blessed be God, that you have been enabled to receive Jesus as your best Friend. He is a Friend that loveth at all times; He is well able to supply all your wants; and oh! the mercy. He is as able as He is willing. In Him is all fulness; hence you are welcome to receive grace for grace. He is never tired of our supplications to Him. His company is most pleasant, His words are most kind and instructive, His smiles are life itself, for His countenance is more glorious than the sun in his meridian strength and splendour, His hands (*once pierced with nails,*) are now filled with blessings of the covenant of grace, and stretched out for distribution. "Ask, and ye shall receive." Come, then, my dear friend, come to Him for all you want. I cannot describe Him; but I will extol Him in the highest; and after all I can say of Him, the poorness of my language will only sully those glories, which I wish to exhibit. He is an unbounded ocean of love—a never-failing fountain of compassion—an immensity of sympathy—infinite wisdom—Almighty power—matchless condensation, and unparalleled glory, are His; in a word, all that is valuable, admirable, and desirable, meet in Jesus. And all are yours, because you have been enabled to receive Him as your WISDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFICATION, and complete REDEMPTION. While my pen runs over the paper, my heart glows with love to Him; and while I recollect His love to you, in giving you His grace, the flame rises higher. Oh! that you may catch a spark of the holy fire while you read this letter. Survey, my dear friend, the sovereignty of His grace—the very eyesight with which you behold His glories He gave you, for you were once blind to them—the hand (Faith,) by which you received Him you first received from Him—the surrender you have made to Him was produced by His constraining grace—the desire you feel after Him, He inspired by His Spirit in your bosom—and the love you now feel to Him is but the effusion of His own love, which, by His Spirit, He has shed abroad in your soul. Precious Christ! all spiritual blessings flow from thee—all tend to thee—all display thy Divine perfection, and endear thee to the souls of thy ransomed ones.

What a mercy to have this precious Christ dwelling in our hearts! for, possessing Christ, we are said to possess all things. Nor can we be robbed of our inheritance; it is protected by Divine power, and secured

by unchangeable love. No change of circumstances can remove our dear Friend from us; nor can even our sinful ingratitude wean His affection, or cause His love to abate. Now, my dear friend, as you have received this precious Christ, let me exhort you to walk in Him—that is, live upon His fulness—trust wholly to His blood and merits for acceptance before God—embrace His promises as the rich provision which He has provided for your soul—attend to His ordinances as meal-times, when your soul expects to be fed—consult Him in all difficulties—employ Him in all your concerns—load Him with all your burdens—cleave to Him affectionately—converse with Him freely—honour Him daily—and expect from Him all the grace, strength, comfort, and riches your soul can need; and soon the glad day shall come, when your soul shall see Him as He is, be like Him, and sing His praise for ever. *With confidence* that I shall there meet you with joy, and earnestly praying to be prepared for it,

I subscribe myself,

Your affectionate Pastor and Friend,

J. IRONS.

Sawston, July 27, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I take the first opportunity of informing you, that your letter came safe to hand, also the two for *Mrs. Irons*. The perusal of yours gave me much pleasure, because I gather from it that you are still holding on your way. The subject upon which you ask my advice is a *very important one*; and my advice to you now is precisely the same as it was when I sat chatting with you on the same subject in your shop some time since.

Never, never consent to any proposals from graceless men. This evil has caused God's Spirit to strive with man, from the earliest period of time, as you may see it recorded in the 6th chapter of Genesis, 2nd and 3rd verses—The sons of God *should marry the daughters of God, and the daughters of God should marry the sons of God*, AND NONE ELSE; all other marriages, is uniting Christ with Belial, is forbidden in Scripture, is offensive to God, and highly injurious to the soul. My friend, it would greatly grieve me, to have any of my dear children in the Lord thus unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. I have felt much for Mary on this account; and although I hope and pray that God will preserve her from so grievous a snare, yet I confess that I cannot dismiss my suspicions concerning her unto this day. My dear friend, I rejoice that you look upon these offers as snares laid by the great enemy of souls for

you. Such they really are; and I pray that you may have grace sufficient to escape them, and resist them with Christian fortitude. It affords me much pleasure to recollect that I was the honoured instrument of tying the marriage-knot between you and the *best of Husbands*; and I beseech and entreat you never to grieve Him and me by taking an enemy of His into your bosom; and every unconverted man, however moral he may be, is an enemy to Christ. You complain of a hard heart, deadness, and darkness; but you must have life, or you would not have feeling—for the dead feel not. This is a proof positive that the life of God is communicated to you; and all the wants that you express in your letter to me, remember, Jesus—thy Jesus—is exalted to give; and all you complain of, none but renewed souls are the subjects of. Such feelings are the legitimate fruits of the Spirit. Cleave closely to Christ—unburden all to Him. His grace is sufficient for you. He will never leave nor forsake you; for we are persuaded that He which hath begun a good work *in you* will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ.

With kind Christian love, in which Mrs. Irons unites, believe me to be,

Your affectionate Friend in Christ Jesus, the Head of the Church,

J. IRONS.

TO MRS. C.

Sawston, Feb. 21, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The many comfortable hours that I have spent in your house, and the many spiritual blessings the Lord has given to you through my instrumentality, and the many kindnesses which you have shown to my family and myself, now occur to my mind, and induce me to address a few lines to you, and may the Holy Spirit direct me to say something that shall do you good—I know you need it, being daily called to experience the truth of that Scripture, “Through much tribulation *we* must enter the kingdom.” What a mercy, dear friend, if you and I are included in that little word “*we*,” we who have forfeited everything valuable, and merited everything terrible—we who were by nature helpless and hopeless—we who were doomed to a dungeon of eternal misery—we who are restored by Divine compassion, renewed by irresistible grace, pardoned by sovereign love, and united to the Son of God by a living faith—we who were once travelling to destruction, are now looking forward to a kingdom—a kingdom that knows no confusion, disorder, or invasion; no famine or poverty—a kingdom without a sorrow or a tear—a kingdom that

excludes all doubts, and fears, and tormenting anxieties, and what is best of all, "It is a kingdom that cannot be moved" (Heb. xii. 28); all other kingdoms must be shaken with convulsions, overturned by enemies, dissolved by time, or consumed by the general conflagration of all things—but our kingdom shall endure for ever, it cannot be removed. How properly then, is the definite article affixed to it—**THE** kingdom that shall excel, outlive, and conquer all others. Now, my dear friend, think for a moment what it must be to *enter* this kingdom, to turn our backs upon the world, a wilderness of woe—pass by the gulph of perdition, triumphantly leave the field of battle, put off our armour, and enter the kingdom; to enter as welcome visitors, to enter as proper heirs, to enter amidst the shout of angels, and with the approbation of Jehovah; and oh, how sweet the thought—enter to go no more out for ever. Moreover, it is said we *must* enter, notwithstanding all our present unfitness for it—notwithstanding all the enemies that oppose us—notwithstanding all our lukewarmness and idleness in travelling to it—yea, although we have frequently forfeited it, we *must* enter, because God has said it—*must* enter, because Christ demands it—*must* enter, because the covenant of grace secures it—*must* enter, because the covenant of grace gives a title to it; be not dismayed at the pathway that leads to it, although it be through TRIBULATION, it is the right way, because God has appointed it. Tribulation is like fuel, when kindled by the fire of sanctification, burns up the love of sin. Tribulation is like an ocean, and when the wind of the Spirit blows on its waves it drowns sensuality, and imparts health to the soul; and if we reflect for a moment on the depravity of our nature we shall find that we have need of much tribulation, for we have much impurity to cleanse away—much need of weaning from the world, much wanting to prepare us for heaven; but however much tribulation there may be in our path, we are to go through it, and not to continue in it. Ah! to go through it unhurt by it—yea, to go through it with advantage—to go through it—to enter the kingdom, where tribulation cannot follow. Seeing, then, dear friend, that this is the pathway and prospect of every Christian, allow me to exhort you in the language of the apostle, "Gird up the loins of your mind;" do live above the world and its trifles; practise much self denial; daily take up the cross and follow hard after Christ, reckoning with Paul "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with that glory that is to be realized in us" in our kingdom.

May the everlasting love of God be the constant joy of your heart—may the treasures of the covenant of grace be constantly imparted to you, may the presence of Christ be daily experienced by you, and His grace perpetually promoted in your life and conversation, until eternal glory shall

be fully realized by you is the fervent prayer of your sincere, though unworthy pastor,

J. IRONS.

To Miss C——.

Sawston, February 22, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The concern that I feel, and trust I always shall feel, for your best interest, prompts me to write a few lines to you, relative to your present probationary state; and allow me to remind you that you are placed in a country that is barrenness in the abstract, from the day in which it was said to our first parent, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." Down to the present hour it has never brought forth one grain of satisfactory food for the immortal mind; so that all the supplies that you get for your soul must be imported from a better country, even a heavenly one—a country much higher than this polluted world—a land flowing with milk and honey. And what a mercy that there is no tax upon the importation, except the duty of praise. Moreover, the country through which you are passing is said to bring forth thorns and thistles (Gen. iii. 18). Prickly things indeed! And yet how fond we are apt to be of them, although often pierced by them! The riches, pleasures, honours, and friendships of this world are like so many gilded thorns, that glitter to the sight, but disappoint the mind, mar the best enjoyments, clog the heaven-bound traveller, and often wound the soul. Now, my dear friend, it is my sincere wish that you may avoid these evils; therefore I advise you to tread that narrow path that He, whose "feet are like unto fine brass," has trodden before you. He has trodden down most of the thorns; and by following close to Him, clothed (not in Saul's coat of mail), but in Jesu's righteousness, "and your feet being shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," the thorns and thistles will do you no essential injury, although they may make you now and then smart; but the thorns and thistles are not the worst of the evils this strange land produces; it brings forth many poisonous berries, which are exceedingly dangerous to the health, and sometimes fatal to the life; they are known by the names of SENSUALITY, SELF-LOVE, PRIDE, FLATTERY, DISCONTENT, UNBELIEF, and NEGLIGENCE, with many others which are very palatable to the taste of our depraved nature, but are full of deadly poison. I cannot, in the narrow limits of a sheet of paper, give you a full description of them all; but allow me, in Christian love and affection, just to name some of the evil consequences of tasting these poisonous berries. They will

injure the eyesight, so as to make all things appear in a mist; they will bewilder the judgment, so as to lead into dreadful bogs; they will benumb the feelings, so as to render them callous to the best impressions; they will take away the appetite, so that there will be no relish for good wholesome food; in a word (unless timely remedies be employed), they will produce an incurable consumption, and end in eternal death. They cannot indeed prove fatal to you, who possess a Divine life; but as they will produce the other bad effects, permit me to caution you against them. And whenever you perceive the first symptoms of them, an *unusual propensity to sleep*, apply immediately to the Great Physician, and take the medicine He prescribes, such as *retirement, meditation, examination*, and a *large pill of self-denial*; these being all distilled in that Fountain which is opened for sin and uncleanness, will, I doubt not, do you much good, both as a *restorative* and as a *preservative*. Furthermore, I would remind you that, in your present state of probation, you are surrounded with enemies, from whom you must expect many insolent and daring attacks upon your comforts, your principles, and your progress. But fear not. Gird on the armour of God, and fight the good fight of faith, and you shall lay hold on eternal life. That sword which first delivered your soul from bondage, still retains its power; it is a thorough *Jerusalem blade*. It will cut through iron sinews, pierce through Infidel breastplates—yea, slay Goliath and Dagon, without blunting its edge; that shield which Jesus is the maker of, will repel all the darts which can be hurled at you, though they be pointed with all the skill of the old serpent, and levelled with Satanic rage. But while I am thus cautioning you against your enemies, do not forget your own weakness. You are not able to withstand the smallest of them in your own strength; yea, there is a natural proneness in us all to yield to their insinuations, and bow to their yoke. Be anxious, therefore, to keep close to your Captain; obey His word of command; depend wholly on His power and skill for conquest; and believe me, my friend, you will never be overcome nor foiled, but shall overcome them all, through the blood of the Lamb. And oh! how pleasing the thought, that those that overcome shall sit down with Him on His throne, even as He has overcome, and has sat down with His Father on His throne. Amen.

Press on, thou favourite of the Lord,
 Though thorns infest the heavenly road;
 Disdain the poisonous fruits that grow
 In all the land through which you go;
 Lift up your hand, and pluck the fruit
 Of life's fair tree: its juice will suit

Your taste, which is by grace refin'd,
 And give new vigour to your mind.
 Upheld by power and love Divine,
 Your foes around, below, within,
 Shall soon lie conquered at your feet,
 And you shall take the cong'ror's seat.

I am, my dear child,

Your spiritual Father, and affectionate Pastor in Christ Jesus,

J. IRONS.

A MINISTER'S FAREWELL ADDRESS TO HIS SPIRITUAL CHILDREN,

ON BEING REMOVED FROM THEM, FOR A LARGER SPHERE OF
 USEFULNESS.

In all Jehovah's works and ways,
 Creation, providence, and grace,
 His sovereignty is shown ;
 In highest beams of gospel light,
 In darkest shades of adverse night,
 His truth and grace are known.

Enwraapt within th' Eternal mind,
 His plans are to Himself confin'd,
 And hid from human view ;
 His hand performs His vast designs,
 In all His works His Godhead shines—
 His ways are just and true.

All worlds submit to His commands,
 He holds our comforts in His hands,
 And gives them as He please;
 His eyes survey heaven, earth, and hell,
 His wisdom governs all things well,
 His power controls the seas.

Tho' He in anger hides His face,
 And thus corrects the child of grace,
 His frowns are lin'd with love ;
 Although the cross be in our path,
 To prove our love and try our faith,
 From us He'll ne'er remove.

When His indulgent hands afford
 Some transient good, like Jonah's gourd,
 We may, like him, be glad;
 If worms beneath its root should lie,
 And in a night it droop and die,
 We ought not to be sad.

Often in wisdom He removes
 Some temp'ral good from those He loves,
 But ne'er *Himself* departs;
 He often takes our joys away,
 To teach our souls to watch and pray—
 And thus He gains our hearts.

And shall His children dare complain,
 Or try His conduct to arraign
 At human reason's bar?
 Such conduct pleases Satan well,
 Its consequences few can tell—
 'T will all our comforts mar.

His own inscrutable decree,
 Without consulting *you* or *me*,
 Appointed my remove;
 Resign'd unto our *Father's will*,
 Oh! hear Him saying, "Peace, be still,"
 And trust unchanging love.

I leave you—not as orphans here—
 I leave you in a Father's care;
 He will your wants supply;
 He'll never leave His chosen seed,
 He'll give you help in time of need,
 And guide you till you die.

Leave you? Oh, no! I cannot bear;
 I'll take you in the arms of pray'r,
 When I approach the King;
 When He admits me near His throne
 Of grace, I will not go alone,
 But all my children bring.

A MEMOIR OF

Our lots asunder may be cast,
 But grace unites our souls so fast,
 That they can never part ;
 Whene'er the Saviour's love I tell,
 Where'er I move, where'er I dwell,
You'll live within my heart.

Hold fast the doctrines I have taught,
 Which Jesus to your souls has brought,
 By my poor, stamm'ring voice ;
 To hear my children walk in love,
 In paths that lead to joys above,
 Will make my soul rejoice.

Let vice and error be abhorr'd,
 Try all things by the written word,
 And pray for light Divine ;
 Ne'er envy worldlings' paltry store,
 Let faith eternal wealth explore,
 And claim all heaven as thine.

Thus while we trace the desert through,
 We'll keep celestial joys in view,
 Thankful for mercies given ;
 Though at a distance we may walk,
 Of Jesu's love we still will talk,
 Until we meet in heaven.

Then change our sorrows for a song,
 See all was right we here thought wrong,
 And join the choir above ;
 Where pure affection will be known,
 And we each bow before the throne,
 Absorb'd in Jesu's love.

Your affectionate Friend and late Pastor,

J. IRONS.

P.S.—Zeal for God, and love to souls, are the soul of preaching. A man, in the cause of God, must renounce his own ease, his honour, and his interest. His ease must be renounced for constant and laborious services—his honour for the stigma of the cross, and the ridicule of strange names—his interest for poverty and straits, or perhaps bonds and imprisonments. “Who is sufficient for these things?” “I (says Paul,) can do all things, through Christ strengthening me” (Phil. iv. 13).

The following letter was written to a friend, who had been tempted by Satan to believe the horrid doctrines held by the Unitarians; and it gives a lively specimen of the writer's zeal for the good of souls, and, above all, the honour, glory, and perfection pertaining to the Christ of God, which he daily exalted.

Sawston.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

When I received your letter, my spirit was stirred within me (like Paul, on Mar's Hill—Acts xvii. 22,) to find that your mind should be harassed by one of the most diabolical heresies that ever disgraced the Christian faith; viz., *Unitarianism*. Why, they deny the Divinity of Christ; and, to do so, they might as well deny the whole of the Bible, and the existence of a God; for if Christ be not truly and properly God, then the whole scheme of religion is a cunningly-devised fable. But that your mind may be fortified against such wicked doctrines, allow me to lay before you one or two of the plainest reasons for the above assertions. And, FIRST, let us inquire what our natural state is, and what sort of a Saviour we need. Scripture has concluded us all under sin (Gal. iii. 22); and our sin is committed against an infinite Being, even God; therefore nothing but an infinite sacrifice can deliver us from the final, fatal consequences of sin. Now, if Christ be only a finite being (which the Unitarians declare), He could not offer an infinite sacrifice; and, consequently, sin must remain unatoned for, and sinners must remain for ever unpardoned. I would ask a Socinian or Unitarian how he would approach Deity? Would he presume on the mercy of God? I would affirm, with reverence—God cannot, consistent with His own perfections, show mercy to any poor sinner, but in and through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ; and if Christ be not God, there is no more merit in His death than in yours or mine. I would ask, moreover, how they can read their Bible? Does not Isaiah expressly call Him “the mighty God?” (chap. ix. 6). Did He not receive worship from His creatures in the days of His flesh? (Matt. xiv. 33; xxviii. 9; Mark v. 6; John ix. 38). Yea, did not God the Father command all the angels to worship Him? (Heb. i. 6). So that if to worship Christ be idolatry, then God is the author of it, angels are the patterns of it, and Christ Himself sanctions it; therefore you and I may safely practice it; in a word, He is expressly called the Creator of all things (Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2). Oh! how I pity the state of these poor deluded enthusiasts. Their ignorance is worse than that of the Jews; for when the eternal

God Jesus said unto the diseased man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," they exclaimed, "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" (Luke v. 21). From whence we may fairly infer, that as Christ forgave sins, He is truly and properly God. Their state before God is as bad, or worse, than the most vile profligate's in the world; for I am confident, from the whole testimony of Scripture, that it is not possible for those to be saved who live and die denying the Divinity of the Son of God. It is written, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." How awful! yet how true.

Of all the systems in the world, this is the most dangerous, because they put on the appearance of sanctity, and profess to be Christians, while, in reality, they deny the whole foundation upon which the system of Christianity is built. Allow me to exhort you by no means to read their books; they will only tend to bewilder your mind, and lead you astray from the right path. Read your Bible, and pray for Divine illumination to enable you to understand it, and I doubt not but you will *clearly see the Divinity of Christ*, beaming forth, like the noonday sun, in all the types, histories, prophecies, and instruction it contains, from Genesis to Revelations. Furthermore, I would inquire with whom you are trusting your soul for eternity. You answer, "With Christ." Then I ask, Will you trust so valuable a gem as your precious, immortal soul with any being who is inferior to Deity? This, indeed, would be presumption of the highest description; for, if you consider for a moment our own extreme weakness, and the many enemies to which we are exposed—the world, the wicked one, and our own evil propensities, it must appear the height of madness to trust our souls in the hand of any but Him who is Almighty. Let us follow the example of the great apostle (2 Tim. i. 12). He had committed his soul into the hands of Christ; and this he would not have done, but for the persuasion that He was able to save to the uttermost all that came unto the Father by Him. Christ says, "I and my Father are *one* in essence and power." Come, then, my dear friend, come to Christ as the God-man Mediator; worship Him, rely on Him, trust in His mercy, and thou shalt have eternal life. And with regard to these refined Infidels, who call themselves Unitarians, I would exhort you, in the language of good old Jacob (Gen. xlix. 6), "Come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly be not thou united." Whenever you come to God by prayer, come to Him in the name of Christ as Mediator; constantly give Him Divine honours, and point every Socinian or Unitarian you meet with to His own solemn language (Matt. x. 33), "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father." May the Lord deliver your soul from this snare.

J esus is God, or God there's none—
 E ach God-like attribute His own ;
 S aints, seraphs, Scripture, Satan, too, }
 U nite to own this doctrine true ;
 S ocinians would, if Him they knew.

C reator, King, Emmanuel,
 H e's lov'd in heaven, He's feared in hell ;
 R edeemer strong, Physician kind,
 I n Him, the saints a refuge find ;
 S urety and Judge, He's God most high—
 T hose that deny Him, He'll deny.

Yours in Jesus,

J. IRONS.

To MRS. H——.

Sarwston, March 10, 1817.

* * * * Respecting the subject stated in the 6th of Hebrews, which you say has much perplexed you, I trust a few words, under the Divine blessing, may set your mind at rest. It is a description of a person who possesses everything in the religion of Christ but the *Divine essence*, and is a total stranger to *that*. When such an one falls away irrecoverably, he is given up to hardness of heart, and never more feels any sorrow for sin, or hatred to it ; so that, while you know anything of repentance at the foot of the cross, you may take it for granted you are *not* the person there described ; and your fears concerning it were only the sad concurrence of unbelief with the insinuations of Satan.

With regard to your other request, I give my advice as one that has obtained mercy. To understand the apostle's exhortation, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," we must bear in mind the *persons* to whom it was *addressed*, then examine his *meaning*, and notice the *motives* by which it may be *enforced*. The persons addressed are here described in the 1st chapter, and 7th verse. They are said to be *saints*, and, as such, know something of the preciousness of Christ to their souls, and become desirous of "putting Him on." They have felt their *need* of Christ, and know themselves to be undone for ever without Him. Moreover, He has graciously manifested Himself to them by the influence of His Holy Spirit, and made them to admire Him, to love Him, and long after Him with ardent desire. They have received Divine favours at His hands, and are powerfully attracted—yea, *captivated*, with His charms. These saints (when faith is in lively exercise) lay claim to Christ as their *portion*, in whom all the treasures of the covenant of grace are contained ; by whom

they become rich in *gospel blessings*, *good works*, and eternal *glory*. And this portion they receive at the hand of their covenant God and Father, as His sovereign gift. In Him their happiness centres, and heaven itself would not be desirable without Him.

Now let us glance at the *meaning* in this exhortation. It relates, first, to the essence of experimental religion putting on the *righteousness* of Christ as a robe to cover us, defend us, and dignify us; putting on the *graces* of the *Spirit of Christ* to adorn and beautify us, that we may be fit to appear in the court of heaven; putting on the *covenant fulness* of Christ—that is, appropriating it, using it freely, and living upon it constantly; putting on His *precious promises* as a golden chain about our necks, every link of which is cemented with His precious blood. Is not this blessed employment, thus to be “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ,” living in Him, walking in Him, yea, dying in Him? Again, it relates to practical religion—putting on the mind, temper, and moral likeness of Christ; putting on His cross, with all its *stigma*, as our *badge of honour*—glorying in it, and nailing our old man of sin to it, deriving continual strength from it, and anticipating the glory it secures to us. All this is the work of that faith, of which Christ is the Author, Strength, and Finisher. Yes, it is faith that receives Christ as the Father’s gift, clings to His cross, and scorns to *trust in* or *wear* any righteousness but His. Need I urge any *motives* to *obey* this exhortation? Then I would add, putting on Christ is the best way of obtaining and manifesting *decision of character*; and, consequently, to *silence* our *fears*, and the *gainsayings* of the *ungodly*. It is the best way of rendering us invincible to the attacks of the enemy of souls, who has much less trouble with a thousand legal combatants than with *one good soldier*, clad in the armour of God, and “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Christ is *honoured* when a poor sinner gladly renounces *righteous self*, as well as *sinful self*, and counts all but dross to be found in Him. May you be enabled thus to put on Christ.

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

TO MR. J— C—.

Sawston, Jan. 15, 1818.

DEAR SIR,

My promise to send you the outline of my sermon, preached at Mr. C.’s Chapel, should have been performed earlier, but for want of time. You must not expect more than a mere outline, as I have no more in possession. The dear Redeemer has promised that the Spirit should bring all things to our remembrance; I trust you will be looking up for

the fulfilment of His promise in the confidence of faith, and derive some spiritual benefit from the survey of the subject.

“Loose him, and let him go” (John xi. 44). The miracles of Christ are designed to display His power, and to convey spiritual instruction to the mind of man. In these words we have—

I.—The spiritual import of the Divine mandate, “Loose him,” &c.

1st. It relates to the quickened soul held in bonds, such as—

The bonds of slavish fear, connected with legal hope, &c.

The bonds of religious prejudice and indwelling corruptions.

These bonds are grievous to quickened souls *only*; those who are dead cannot feel.

2ndly. It contains the substance of the gospel message, “Loose him” (Isaiah lxi. 1.)

This message is exactly suited to our condition.

But it is entirely useless till received by a living faith.

It is very offensive to the carnal mind (John viii. 33).

3rdly. It points to the summit of gospel liberty.

Breaking the snares of the fowler, by which we were held.

Giving us access to God with freedom, and the free exercise of His graces. The liberty of the sons of God.

Finally emancipating us from the very existence of sin. Oh, happy day for all the saints! My soul anticipates it.

II.—The Divine authority of this mandate, “*Jesus* saith.”

1st. *He* who had said, “Lazarus, come forth,” quickening the dead.

This *Jesus now* exercises the same authority in the means of grace.

His power alone can break our bonds, and give us liberty of soul.

To His power and authority all must, sooner or later, submit.

2ndly. *He* whose affection made Him weep over the dead (ver. 35).

His affection to sinners is sovereign in its exercise.

It is immutable in its nature, and everlasting in its duration.

It is powerful and extensive, giving both life and liberty.

3rdly. *He* saith it to all parties, “Loose him.”

To Divine justice in the demand of His intercession.

To the Holy Spirit, whom *He* sends in His name.

To the ministers of the gospel, pointing them to their work.

III.—The special design of this mandate, “Loose him, and *let him go*.”

1st. “That he may enjoy the life I have given him.”

In all its privileges, private and public.

For which gospel freedom is essential.

To which every quickened soul is entitled.

2ndly. "That He may do the work I have appointed him."

In his own heart, pulling down the works of darkness there.

In the Church, promoting its best interests zealously.

In the world, doing good to all men, especially to the household of faith, maintaining his distinction therefrom.

3rdly. "That he may tell the wonders I have done for him."

To vent the joyous emotions of his soul.

To encourage others who are yet in bonds,

And finally to swell the triumphs of heaven.

I pray, my dear friend, that the above may impart a second benefit to your soul.

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

To Miss C—.

Sawston, —, 1815.

I am fully persuaded that all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth. Though you are not permitted to glean in that part of the field which would be the object of your choice, yet He will kindly let fall some handfuls, on purpose for you. Desirous of again helping you in your spiritual gleaning, I will refer you to the 2nd chapter of Ruth. Pause at the latter part of the 9th verse, when observe you are to expect *thirsty* seasons; and a great mercy it is to feel a spiritual thirst, since our Boaz has pronounced them blessed who "thirst after righteousness," and has promised to satiate them, and has provided us with wells of salvation, and vessels for the field; and has told the young men to draw—yea, more, invites you to drink, saying, "Drink abundantly, O beloved." Now these wells are *numerous*, *deep*, and never *dry*. They are the doctrines, promises, and precepts of the gospel, *deep* as the eternal counsels of God, nor can they be fully fathomed by finite minds. They can never be dry, because they are constantly supplied from the inexhaustible fulness of the the covenant of grace. But these wells would be useless to us without vessels; therefore, our God has sent into His gospel fields His *written word*, His *standing ministry*, and His *ordinances*, as vessels, by which He communicates the waters of life to thirsty souls. Moreover, Boaz knew that empty vessels would be of no use to poor thirsty gleaners, and therefore taught and commanded his young men to draw water in them. Thus Jesus Christ directs and enables His ministers to draw spiritual comforts in the means of grace for His thirsty saints. But, alas! they sometimes are leaky buckets; and then, though they plunge them deep, they bring up but little or no water. Again, sometimes they use unclean buckets, and then the little water they do bring up is thick and unwholesome; but all Christ's ministers use the bucket of faith, suspended by the chain of

Divine influence, and thus are enabled to keep the vessels constantly supplied with pure water. Now, my dear friend, improve the privilege to which you are invited. "Go to the vessels and drink," that you may be refreshed, and enabled to glean with more vigour and success. Peradventure you are saying, "What with '*leaky* buckets,' and '*muddy* buckets, and '*empty* vessels, I sometimes can get nothing to drink. Then take the empty vessels, and draw for yourself. You will not be the first female who has been thus employed. You will be imitating the pattern of Rebekah in the Old Testament, and the woman of Samaria in the New. And O ! if Christ should meet you at the well, *He* (like Jacob for Rachel) will draw water for you abundantly.

That you may find the wells of salvation overflowing the vessels of ordinances, and ever flowing into your soul with new delights, is the daily prayer of

Yours in Christ,

J. IRONS.

To MRS. F——.

April 22, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As the usual compliment when friends meet is, "How do you do?" I will now suppose myself to be meeting my friends and daughters, and ask, How does thy soul prosper? "Is it well with thee?" These inquiries, satisfactorily answered, would do my soul good. But, methinks I hear you say, "I am at a loss to answer these things." I will therefore endeavour to assist you in this important affair by observing, that a *keen appetite* is one good sign of health. Then say, dear friend, do you feel a craving desire after the bread of life that cometh down from above? Do you feel an emptiness in your soul which Christ alone can fill? Do you feel an hungering and thirsting after the word and ordinances of God? Then you have a good evidence that you are in health—may God establish and increase it. Another sign of health is vigour and activity. There are some professors of religion about whom there always appears a torpidness and languor, which bespeaks to all around their sickly state. Tell me, then, is your faith strong and lively? Can you rely implicitly upon the blood and righteousness of Christ? Can you grasp His promises with a vigorous hand, saying, "These are mine?" Can you trust to Him who made them to fulfil them in His own time and way? and can you do this in dark seasons? It is the province of faith to be the soul's *guide* in the dark, the soul's *convoy* in danger, and the soul's *key* to the Father's treasury in the time of famine. Take care, then, that you do not let your *guide* go to sleep, never let your

convoy be out of sight while crossing this boisterous ocean; and as for your *key*, you cannot lose it if once you have received it, but take care to use it often enough to prevent its getting rusty, and then you will have evidence that you have health of soul. Moreover, if you would ascertain what the state of your health is, inquire whether *hope* is in lively exercise. This is an aspiring grace, it generally climbs very high, except when the soul is in a deep decline. It is so active, that it soars above the world, outvies the flight of eagles, pierces the thickest clouds, and "enters into that within the veil." Hope is the soul's ambassador in the court of heaven; there it represents the soul's wishes, transacts the soul's business, and sends down the most important communications to the soul. It tells how anxiously angels are expecting its arrival there, what preparation the King has made for its reception, and what honours He intends to confer upon it. His communications are always peaceable; and if we would preserve spiritual health, we must not cramp his exertions, ill treat his messengers, or clog his aspiring disposition. Above all never commission him to declare war with the court of heaven, nor suffer a provocation to be carried thither by him, for so the worst consequences must ensue. Again, when the soul is in good health, *love* will glow like holy fire, burst forth like heavenly flame, burn through every faculty of the soul, warming all its powers, consuming nothing but sin, and rising with celestial vivacity to heaven, its native source. Say now, is thy soul in health? or is it sinking into spiritual decline? If the answer be in the affirmative, thou hast cause to bless God; but if in the negative, haste to the good Physician, tell Him every symptom of disorder you feel, leave Him to prescribe the medicine, and be sure you do not refuse to take it. Perhaps He may order some painful privation, or He may give you a bitter draught of affliction, or a sour mixture of evil treatment or disappointment; but be sure of this, He will give you nothing but what will do you good; and, if received and sanctified, will quicken your appetite, invigorate the graces of the Spirit, and restore health to your soul.

That the great Physician may preserve and increase your soul's health and prosperity, is the prayer of your sincere and affectionate friend for Christ's sake,

J. IRONS.

To MRS. F——.

You say that you find this life a "stormy passage." The expression is full of meaning; suppose I anatomize it. In the first place, a *passage* is not a dwelling-place, but it generally leads to one; then do not expect

to find a resting-place here below, but constantly keep your own words in mind. This world is a passage, in which, if you allow your elbows to stick out with pride, you must expect to get many a *rap*; and if not very careful you will be in danger of stumbling, for it is very rough in some places; be sure to keep fast hold of the hand-rail called communion; and always be looking forward to the *end* of this passage, for if you look much on the things which surround you they will dazzle your eyes, and perhaps bewilder you. Moreover, it is not customary for any but strangers to sit down in the passage, the family go right through to the parlour. Now I trust you are one of the children; then do not act as a stranger, and sit down in the passage, but press forward untill you arrive where your Father dwells. There will be many calling after you to hinder you, but do not listen to them. There is that meagre-looking fellow, Discontent, and long-necked Covetousness, and spiteful Envy, smiling Sensuality, with many others, their companions, incessantly calling after you, but go on, regardless of all they may say. But there is a grey-headed old enemy, who will often forestall you, and try to darken the passage—his name is Unbelief. He is a sturdy-looking fellow, with a countenance like brass, his heart is a stranger to pity, his tongue a stranger to truth, and his skin is so hard that nothing will penetrate it but the sword of the Spirit. Whenever you meet him show him no quarter, but draw your sword, dip its point in that blood which flowed from Calvary, and aim at his heart. But you say it is a “stormy passage;” so much the better, it will prompt you to make the more haste home; and there can be no danger in the storm, because your Father gathers the winds in His fist (Prov. xxx. 4), and He will only suffer them to blow enough to blow away the rags of self-righteousness. He who bindeth the floods from overflowing, so that they can only wash away the filth of sin (Job xxviii.), He is also a “covert from the storm” (Isa. iv. 6); so that I do not wonder to hear you talk of getting “safe to heaven at last.” In fact, it cannot be otherwise, if you are born of God; for all God’s children are as safe in the passage as they are in their Father’s house, though not so *comfortable*. You also say that you cannot give up your hope. No; it is fixed on the Rock of Ages at one end, and united to your soul at the other, and neither men nor devils can break it. Go and sing—

“Since I possess this heavenly hope,

• What can I want beside?

I’ll grasp this sacred cable rope,

And every storm outside.”

Yours,

J. IRONS.

To MISS C——.

Sawston, June 22, 1815.

I WAS impressed with the pleasure you expressed at obtaining a rose from my old garden. Allow me to present you with a far superior one, even the "*Rose of Sharon*," the beauty of which excels all the flowers of the garden. Justly is it admired, both in heaven and earth, for its beauty, "being the brightness of His Father's glory." Gaze upon every leaf of this Rose, namely, the *offices* of *Christ*, and the longer you look upon it the more beautiful it will appear. I trust it is the chief ornament of the garden of your heart, and that its sacred fragrance often refreshes your mind. Let me advise you to wear it in your bosom; you need not fear its fading, for every leaf is immutable, and its beauteous hue can never change. It will often refresh your spirit as you travel across this desert; and such are its healing qualities, that it is the best cure for all spiritual maladies, and the only remedy for declines. Moreover, you may grasp this Rose with the greatest safety, for there are no thorns about it; once, indeed, it was covered with thorns, and its form much marred thereby; but when they had pierced avenues through which its holy fragrance was emitted, they were shaken from his sacred brow with Godlike majesty, and left on Calvary's hill. The thornless Rose now blooms in immortal vigour in the paradise above, and sheds its fragrance on gardens here below. I will also remind you that this Rose is not merely a single flower, it has buds growing or proceeding from it. Give me leave to name some of them, perhaps it will lead you to examine it more minutely, and prize it more highly. The first I shall name is *Divine purpose*, and a very precious bud this is; it grows out of the *side* of the Rose, just where it was *once pierced with a spear*. It is very full, and when blown it yields the sweetest effluvia that a poor guilty sinner can inhale in this world. Examine this Rose a little further, and you will discover, under that green leaf called *Divine purpose*, *twin buds*—I think they are known by the names of *justification* and *sanctification*; take care that neither of them are broken off, for neither of them will grow alone, nor will they both live if severed from the Rose, but by virtue of the sap they receive from it they send forth the most efficacious medicine and odoriferous perfume in the garden of the Lord. I shall mention but one more of the many buds which grow on this Rose, and that is *consolation*, which has a very short stalk, therefore you must get very near to the Rose itself to possess this bud, and then you will find it very solid and satisfactory; and such are its virtues, that it has kept many a weary traveller from fainting, and even restored them when they have fainted. Now, when these buds are all full blown they will

produce the unparalleled flower called *glory*; and blow they must, because the root on which they grow can never die, its fibres have penetrated deep as *eternity*, and its never-failing sap shall flow to every bud, until, overflowing with immortal bloom, heaven shall be ornamented with its brilliant colours, and you and I partake of its choicest odour in the pure atmosphere of paradise. In the prospect of that day I present you with this Rose, praying that you may often be refreshed by it.

Yours in gospel bonds,

J. IRONS.

To Miss C——, &c.

Dec. 21, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

As we are now drawing to the close of another year, it may not be unprofitable for us to look back through the year that is past, before we enter upon the new one. And, oh, what a scene presents itself to our view at the very first sight, enough to make us stand, like Saul of Tarsus, “trembling and astonished.” Fifty-two weeks have taken their flight up to the throne of God, and there they stand as witnesses; but say, are they witnesses *for* or *against* us? I know my dear friends will not be offended if I say they have much to witness against us. Let us attend a few minutes to their awful declaration; and methinks I hear their voice, like peals of awful thunder, exclaiming, “Thou hast nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against thee.” And while the great Eternal proceeds to examine them, oh! what grievous charges are brought against us. Each has seven pages of record to read, and as He turns them over how are they written in black characters, with rising corruptions, sensual desires, evil tempers, carnal pursuits, omitted duties, lukewarm services, with many others of a similar description. And as if there were not room enough in each day’s page to insert the awful catalogue, they seem interlined with the most affecting words, such as murmurings, envyings, unbelief, pride, doubtings, impatience, self-will, and the like. Each witness presents his roll, all is summed up, and, oh! how dreadful is the year’s account. Conscience gazes upon it, till, dreading impending wrath, he shrinks back in despair, when *faith* lifts up her eyes, and views a crimson ocean rolling its tide around the dread tribunal of God, and obliterating all the dismal crimes before surveyed; and as guilt disappears, faith grows bold, and traces the sin-drowning waves up to their source; and while she gazes on that Divine Person, from whose side they flow, and bathes herself near the fountain Head, she beholds in His almighty hand a book, inscribed on the

outside, "Covenant of Grace." Her Lord unfolds a few leaves, and, oh, how beautifully is it inscribed, how dazzling its colour, and how reviving its records; it seems written by the hand of Deity, with the pen of electing love, and with the blood of the Lamb. And its sacred pages exhibit such lovely words as these—redemption, pardon, life, justification, sanctification, adoption, riches, clothing, food, strength, wisdom, joy, peace, preservation, holiness, glory. Moreover, this sacred book is interlined with the names of *believers*.

Now just take one more glance at the past year, and record some of the many mercies of which we have been the subjects. And here we must each enumerate for ourselves; and I think that, however bad old Discontent may tell us our lot is, we shall find much to be thankful for, both in temporals and spirituals. And if we have not had all we *want*, we have all that is really needful, and that would be for our good.

Wishing you gratitude of heart for the past, faith for the future, and heaven at last,

I am yours, &c.

J. IRONS.

To Miss C—.

January 18, 1817.

* * * * I will endeavour to raise your mind up to that blissful state where sorrow never exists, by contemplating some of its *glories*, its *society*, and the necessary *qualifications* for its *enjoyment*. I think its *purity* would be the first glory that attracted your attention. "No unclean thing can enter there." The contaminating evils which infest this wilderness, and cling to our holiest things, shall be for ever excluded from our celestial inheritance. *Pure* motives actuate every mind; *pure* joys roll in perpetual streams from the source of purity through every purified vessel; and *pure* worship employs the timeless space of everlasting ages. *Harmony* is another conspicuous glory of that blessed abode. The jarring sentiments, and clashing opinions, which here divide the Church, and often separate very dear friends, are unknown there. With cheerful countenances, and ardent feelings, *all* are governed by the law of love—*all* admire one object (Christ)—*all* tune their harps to the same anthem, a copy of which you will find in Rev. vii. 10, 12—*all* are clothed alike—and *all* see eye to eye; party spirit is destroyed, prejudice shut out, and grim care annihilated. Shall I name its *dignity* as another part of its glory? The very pavement is compared to pure gold and to transparent glass; every seat is a throne; and all the inhabitants "kings and priests unto God." Robes are their common garments, and every head is

crowned with glory. Bright mansions grace the street on either side, without a *cottage*, *cave*, or *den*; and omnipotent Deity resides in every part. I must not omit to mention the *perpetuity* of the glory of this inheritance. *Here* below, cities, thrones, and empires, with all their momentary grandeur, rise but to show their vanity, and sink beneath their own enormous weight; but yonder new Jerusalem, built with imperishable stones, outlives them all, and scorns Time's wasting hand. Founded in purposes Divine, *deep* as eternal counsels, and *firm* as the throne on which Jehovah sits, it *shall* not—*cannot* be removed. Its massy pillars are unchanging *love*, and all its walls impassable *decrees*; while every denizen obtains a fixed abode, and shall no more go out. I will just mention its *society*. Angels form the outer circle of that happy throng, and like their station well. Often they flew with messages from heaven, to minister unto the heirs of paradise while travelling here below; and hence they claim a right to join in chorus with them round the throne. But near the throne of God stand ransomed souls with blood-bought crowns, and clad in white attire. Kindred spirits! how they vie in sweet celestial strains! like fellow-travellers at their journey's end, recounting all their toils as monuments of all-sufficient grace. Methinks you say, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly and join the blest assembly." Perhaps I may precede you; if so, I'll tell you where it is likely you will find me—at *Jesu's feet*, between the poor Demoniac and Mary Magdalene. Nor would I leave a station so exalted to possess all earthly diadems and crowns. What—Oh! what would heaven itself be without the presence of *Him* in whom all excellencies centre?—"a dark and tiresome place." But oh, delightful thought! Jesus will never leave the place, or cease to smile on all the blest inhabitants. Now glance at the *qualifications* necessary for its enjoyment. A justifying righteousness. This is bestowed by *sovereign grace*, and received by the hand of faith. Hence it is said of believers, "They are complete in *Him*." A sanctified heart is also necessary, or celestial blessings could not be enjoyed. The expansion and perfection of our spiritual capacities. The measure of glory we are to possess is certainly fixed upon in God's decrees; and He will not take us home until our capacities are capable of receiving it all. And what, if He sees fit to employ crosses, sorrows, and very severe trials, for this sacred purpose, shall we murmur? No! Rather let us adore and praise the God who takes so much pains to fit us for heaven. And rest assured He will not allow us to remain below one moment longer than He has perfected His work *in* and *by* us.

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

A MEMOIR OF

TO THE SAME.

* * * * Remember, all our personal holiness centres in Christ; and as the sap flows from the root of the tree to all its minor branches, so holiness flows from Christ to all His members. Therefore all the holiness we have is by virtue of our union with Him. Hence, to possess holiness, is to possess life Divine—to possess life Divine, is to possess Christ—and to possess Christ, is to possess “*all things*.” Be not discouraged that thy old nature does not get better. Depend upon it, it never will, until it has passed through the grave, and is raised in incorruption.

Yours,

J. IRONS.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

TO MRS. IRONS.

March 13, 1815.

MY DEAR —,

I take up my pen to give you a little account of our Sabbath services. I preached from Job xix. 28—“The root of the matter is found in me.” The root of the matter I showed to be *Christ*. The root is a hidden life, the source of all nourishment, and an abiding principle—such is Christ. The evidences I produced, that this root is in the heart, were the growth of branches—*faith, hope, love*—the flowing of sap. That is a Divine sensation, which is a flowing emotion of spirit towards heaven—the spreading of the fibres of the root (Christ), until He engrosses all the soul, engages all the faculties, and so prevents the growth of sin’s pernicious weeds. Oh! if the root of the matter is thus found in us, we shall have nothing to fear from the storms of time, or the loppings of adversity, or the stroke of death, which can only take away our seared branches and unfruitful boughs; and while fruitless professors are withering daily, and at last become fuel for the eternal burnings, we shall flourish with Divine vigour, and bring forth heavenly fruit, because our nourishment is derived from Christ, the root. Death will indeed one day fell the stem, but it will shoot forth its boughs in a better climate, and live and thrive for ever near the throne of God.

Your station will require all the piety of *Mary*, all the fortitude of *Deborah*, all the benevolence of *Dorcas*, and all the wisdom of the woman recorded in 2 Kings xx. 16—21.

TO MRS. IRONS.

MY DEAR —,

* * * * Allow me to urge you to rest your *all* upon the “Rock of Ages.” It is indeed a boisterous ocean over which *we are sailing to-*

gether, but, blessed be God, *we are in one vessel* (the Church), both in one *cabin* (union of principle), yea, both in one *hammock* (unfeigned love); we have a rich *cargo* (covenant blessings), a wise *Pilot*, whose name is Jesus, and our passage is short to a most delightful *haven*. Let us make ourselves as comfortable as we can with our *messmates*, and be very emulous of obtaining our Captain's favour, and of obeying His commands. The only way to get promoted in His Majesty's service, is to get the Captain to speak for us; and, blessed be His name, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." The Lord bless and keep you. * * * *

TO MRS. IRONS.

Jan. 4, 1815.

I take up my pen in a hurry, just to say that I am going to Haslemere for two Sabbaths, 8th and 15th of January. May the Lord protect you and the dear children, and grant me great success in the proclamation of Divine truth.

TO MRS. IRONS.

Haslemere, Jan. 11, 1815.

I had set my mind powerfully against going to ———, but have been powerfully impressed with the conduct of Jonah. God sent him to Nineveh, but he would have his own way, and go to Tarshish. Ah, how he suffered for it! Oh, my dear, pray for me; for I am in a great strait. Oh, what treacherous hearts have we! How much need of crosses, disappointments, and trials, to keep us in our proper place—viz., at the *foot* of the cross. Let us, my dear, be thankful that we have such a kind Father, who takes so much pains with us to prevent our running to ruin. Certain it is, that the dispensations of His providence are marks of His loving-kindness to us; and yet how our frantic self-will often kicks against them. O for more grace to be resigned to Jehovah's will in all things.

TO MRS. IRONS.

Feb. 21, 1815.

On Sabbath-day there was a good congregation. My answer to the call was read, and appeared to give universal pleasure to the people; but I have learned not to build high-raised expectations on flattering prospects. A clear sky may be clouded in an hour, and send forth a heavy storm. What a mercy, my dear, to have a "hiding-place" in that Friend who sticketh closer than a brother, and is unchangeable in His affection. Let us cultivate a more familiar intimacy with Him, and then we shall be less moved at the vicissitudes of the present state. To honour Christ

should be the business of the Christian's life; and to do this aright will require much self-denial, much humility, much watchfulness, much prayer, much self-examination, and much forbearance with those with whom we have to do. I never *was so much convinced of the importance of our station, and of my own unfitness for it, as I am now.* The eyes of all around are upon the minister and his family; and what would pass unnoticed in the *hearer*, would be considered in *us* a crime unpardonable. We are as a "city set on a hill;" we cannot be hid. Oh, my dear, pray much for me, and much for yourself, that we may be enabled to shine as lights in the world, and so glorify our heavenly Father, and lead others to do the same. Very soon we must give an account of our stewardship. Let us, therefore, be concerned to occupy the talent given us, so that at the coming of our Lord we may be able to say, "Behold, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." And oh, how pleasing the expectation of hearing Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servants." All the effect of His own grace. Remember, my dear, much is expected *of you*, and much may be done *by you*, in example and conversation. Do not suppose I am censuring you. No; far, *very far*, from it; but I wish, like the apostle, to "stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance;" *for none of us have done so much, but that we ought to do more for the honour of God, and the furtherance of His cause.*

To Miss L——.

Nov. 6, 1817.

I remember, when I saw you last, hearing you say that you wanted "a spiritual companion to walk with." Now allow me to recommend one to you, who really loves you, and with whom you have been for some time acquainted. "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." Besides the *dignity* conferred on you by His walking with you, the sweet smiles of His countenance, and the gracious words He speaks, will cheer your heart, and communicate heavenly wisdom to your soul. You may tell Him all your mind with the greatest confidence. You may lean on Him as the beloved of your soul, and He will wrap you in His own robe, and put the ring of everlasting love on your finger. You need not fear any danger while walking with Him; for He will be sure to see it before you do, and His kind omnipotent arm shall well defend you. I must just add, that when you have walked with Him a certain limited time, He will say to you, "Come now, and sit down with me on my throne, as I have sat down with my Father on His throne." Will not this delight you, and induce you to walk with Him here? Yes; methinks you say, with the pious Watts, "O for a closer walk with God."

Permit me, then, my dear friend, to drop you a word of advice respecting walking with Him. Always let Him choose the path. It may be in a valley; but valleys are generally fruitful, if not always pleasant. And when He conducts you to the top of a mount, and gives you a pleasant prospect, be sure you cling closely to Him, and cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe;" otherwise you may turn giddy and fall. Moreover, never go *before* Him. That will displease Him, and subject you to much sorrow; yea, you will thereby be likely to lose sight of Him, and then, "darkness that may be felt" will come upon you. I would further advise you always to take His *portrait* with you—viz., the Bible; and if ever you lose sight of Him, retire to your closet, for He is often to be found there. If He hideth Himself, it is only for a moment, to make you prize His presence more; and be more watchful in walking with Him, and soon shall you "walk with Him in white," when your garment shall not be spotted with the flesh. Hail, happy day! In prospect of its happy dawn, pass through affliction's night in patience, "in patient waiting" for your coming Lord; and though the desert's thorns annoy your every step, soon shall you reach the other side, and tread the Paradise where thorns can never grow. Hold on your way, in Jesu's strength confide, and you shall reach the realms of bliss.

Yours in Jesus,

J. IRONS.

A SEARCH AFTER HAPPINESS; OR, THE HUMAN HEART DISSECTED.

My muse arose, the earth to travel through,
 And pass'd from thing to thing with careful view
 In quest of happiness—with anxious care,
 And thought in the rich prize, to largely share.
 But useless was the search, the thought was vain;
 I sought it in the world—but could not gain.
 Confusion and distress are scatter'd round,
 And vile abominations do abound;
 Sad disappointment ask'd—Oh, who can be
 The author of this great calamity?
 I look'd on either hand, before, behind,
 Yet could I not the dreadful monster find.
 At last I turn'd my roving eyes within,
 And there I found the *traitor*. Oh! 'tis sin,
 I found he in my heart had set his throne,
 Which made me cry, "Alas! for I'm undone."

Alarm'd at what I saw, I look'd again ;
 The more I look'd the more I saw the stain.
 The trait'rous fiend had numerous offspring there,
 Who tried by various ways my soul to snare.
 There I beheld his senior offspring—PRIDE ;
 And DISCONTENT stood restless by his side,
 Forming a plan for some cursed expedition ;
 And, wanting help, they stirr'd up vile AMBITION.
 This group discover'd, led me on to see
 COVETOUSNESS—which is IDOLATRY.
 ENVY and MALICE, too, are lurking there,
 And *Anger* burns until *Revenge* appear.
 "Without the sepulchre" was white and fair,
 And from immoral blemishes was clear.
Uncleaness, Death, and Darkness reign'd within ;
 A den of thieves—a cage of birds unclean.
 I look'd again within my throbbing breast,
 In hope there were no more of these sad guests.
 But, ah ! my hope was vain—I saw still more
 Than e'er I saw when I had look'd before.
 There's UNBELIEF—the wretch that pierced my Lord—
 Sits like a tyrant, with commanding word.
 Bold SHAME stands by, opposing works of grace ;
 But when *Temptation* comes he hides his face.
 Hard thoughts of God are often in me found ;
 Vain words and vile affections do abound ;
 Together with corrupt communications
 Are in the sight of God abominations.—
 Finding such hosts of foes did still remain,
 It made me almost fear to look again.
 But still convinced that while such tyrants reign'd
 Safety and peace, could never be obtain'd,
 I was resolved to trace their haunt within,
 And war declared with every darling sin ;
 But, having neither captain, sword, or shield,
 My sturdy foes, I could not force to yield ;
 And, though I greatly changed their outward form,
 I was not able their strong-holds to storm.
 Thus being foil'd in this my first assail,
 And finding all my battering rams to fail,
 I thought I must a full surrender make,
 When *Captain Jesus* came, and thus He spake :—

" Ah! foolish soul, to think unarm'd to fight
 With principalities, and powers, and might;
 Gird on my strength, and take my sword and shield,
 And I will march before you to the field;
 My power shall conquer every stubborn sin—
 My blood applied shall make you pure within."
 Thus, while He spake, I felt my fears remove;
 His kindness broke my heart, and made it love;
 His great atonement saved my soul from hell;
 His mighty arm my strongest foes can quell.
 While I have such a kind and powerful Friend,
 Whose love towards His chosen knows no end,
 Why should I fear this host of foes within?
 For Jesus reigns triumphant over sin.
 Satan may try his utmost rage and skill,
 And my polluted heart deceive me still;
 Though earth, and hell, and all my lusts combine,
 They can't succeed—the vict'ry must be mine.
 Like heated wax my foes shall melt away,
 My Captain's presence fills them with dismay.
 From conqu'ring and to conquer I'll pursue,
 For Jesus says He'll bear me safely through.
 The shield of faith shall safe protect my heart
 From Satan's rage, and ev'ry fiery dart.
 The power of prayer shall force my foes to yield,
 The Spirit's sword shall force them from the field.
 Now I'll dismiss my fears—defy this train
 Of mighty foes—since Jesus holds their chain.
 I soon shall close the warfare and the fight,
 And dwell with Christ in uncreated light.

ODE ON THE NEW YEAR.

AWAKE, my soul, with sweet surprise,
 The new year's morn salutes thine eyes.
 Another term of life is done,
 Another rolling year begun.
 Amazing grace! that wretch like me
 Is spared another year to see.

My crimes have risen mountains high
 Against the God that rules the sky;

Omission, and commission too,
Have mark'd me all my journey through.
Amazing grace! that wretch like me
Is spared another year to see.

His mighty arm has me upheld,
But I against Him have rebell'd.
He leads and guides me day by day—
Yet, oh! how oft I've gone astray.
Amazing grace! that wretch like me
Is spared another year to see.

He saved my soul from hell and sin,
Yet how ungrateful I have been ;
His drawing love He does impart—
Yet, oh! how lukewarm is my heart.
Amazing grace! that wretch like me
Is spared another year to see.

His Spirit's influence He bestows,
And my proud nature dares oppose ;
Yea, since I have espoused His cause
I've often disobey'd His laws.
Amazing grace! that wretch like me
Is spared another year to see.

He daily gives me daily food ;
He stands engaged to do me good ;
He well supplies my every need,
And yet like swine on husks I feed.
Amazing grace! that wretch like me
Is spared another year to see.

Why is it thus my God forgives ?
Because my intercessor lives.
Jesus appears at God's right hand,
His people's pardon to demand ;
Hence flows the grace, to wretch like me,
And, lo! another year I see.

Then let me not on grace presume,
Lest justice frown and fix my doom ;
Saying (while I am barren found),
“ Destroy that cumberer of the ground.”

Then will it to my shame appear
That I've been spared another year.

Quicken my soul, O Lord, I pray,
That while upon this earth I stay
My years, and days, and hours may be
Employ'd in glorifying thee.
May sovereign grace be still my theme
Till endless years close up the scene.

SERMON TO YOUNG PEOPLE.—PSALM xxv. 7.

SIN, the dire name, by God abhorr'd,
To man a murd'rous foe,
By thousands own'd as sov'reign lord,
Tho' author of their woe.

Sin, baneful tree, has taken root
Deep in the human frame;
It shoots and buds, and brings forth fruit,
And mars the youthful name.

Sin, treach'rous fiend, that leads along
Its thousands day by day,
In the broad road behold they throng,
And neither watch nor pray.

Oh, how Divine compassion shines!
Jehovah still forbears;
And while His justice marks our crimes,
His mercy interferes.

Mercy He still delights to show
To those who for it sue;
Come, then, ye youths, before Him bow,
And prove His promise true.

Say, "Lord, remember not my sin,
Nor crimes of youthful days;"
But let thy pard'ning mercy shine,
And I will sing thy praise.

GRATITUDE.

AMAZING goodness—love supreme!
 I'm still in mercy's reach;
 O may this soul-transporting theme
 Some humbling lesson teach.

Justice might spurn me down to hell;
 Why is not this the case?
 With wonder, love, and joy I tell,
 'Tis all of sov'reign grace.

Thro' grace the serpent's head was broke
 When he had Eve deceived;
 Free grace the gospel promise spoke,
 And man's distress relieved.

Mr. Irons had ample proof that "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" and, under the influence of the spirit of darkness, will continually wage war and oppose the truth, wherever it may be proclaimed. Our dear friend's preaching was searching, and this gave great offence to the Pharisees, who are as numerous now-a-days, as when our beloved Lord and Master was on earth; he could not *shape his sermons to the times*, nor did he ever study to please, at *the expense of Divine truth*. He took the sling and stone, and went forth "in the name of the Lord of hosts;" his whole soul was in the work, and he, like Paul, could say, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." While at Sawston he writes—

"How numerous are the enemies of pure gospel truth—while professors of religion are spreading far and wide; and surely none do so much mischief as those who have the form of godliness, while they deny its power. I would rather preach to a congregation of Infidels and heathens, than Pharisees and formalists.

O Lord, make me faithful, bold, and successful in declaring thy truth; may I never keep back part of the price; and never suffer me to be guilty of the blood of souls; and since my faithfulness greatly offends Satan, and subjects me to so much opposition from false professors, Lord, give grace to bear and forbear, and let thy work go on in the face of *all that men can do or say.*"

About this time his mind was greatly exercised, by being called to part with a family, to whom he had been made very useful, in bringing some of them out of darkness into marvellous light, whom he highly prized; and others had been greatly comforted, established, and built up under the word—distance was the great gulf that was to be placed between them. He writes thus:—

"April 2, 1817. Earthly friends are often like Jonah's gourd—raised up in a night, and also wither in a night. Oh, how mysterious are the ways of God! He has removed from me in His providence a family of choice friends, but, blessed be His name, He has not taken His own friendship away—yea, more, He has promised *He never will.* His own promise runs, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And again, "I will never leave you, no, nor ever forsake you." Peradventure I have been *leaning* too much on an arm of flesh, and now my God has taken it away, that I may *learn to lean and live on Him alone*: earthly friends may and do remove; here we have no continuing city—but the Friend of friends will never depart. Precious, precious Jesus, let me behold thee day by day; whisper peace to my soul and say, 'It is I, be not afraid;' do enable me to glorify thee more and more amidst the trials I have to endure."

"April 28th. Lord, what is thy will concerning me? I know not. As to thy providential dealings, I have a journey before me to Bath. Lord, thou knowest my errand and object—it is to preach Jesus, to exalt a precious Christ. Do let it be for thy honour and the salvation of immortal souls. 'If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence.' Lord, direct me in

every step I take ; let the unctuous power of the Holy Spirit rest on the preached word, I pray thee."

Mr. Irons reached Bath in safety, and says—

"I remained there during the months of May and June, supplying at a new chapel, called PORTLAND CHAPEL, when I received a pressing invitation to become their pastor ; but after much anxiety, consideration, and prayer, I could not see my way clear to accept of it. Having completed my engagement at Bath, I proceeded to Devonport, where I spent the whole of July, and part of August, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, and setting Him forth as the 'Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.' I then returned to Sawston, where I continued labouring among my own people, except for a few weeks at Plymouth, until the closing up of the year 1817. This was a memorable year to me. God's ways are often mysterious, but they are always merciful ; He leads by a right way, to bring us to a city of habitation ; and, however dark, all must be well ; for all things are working together for good !"

REASON TRIUMPHANT.

THE history of human reason is peculiarly interesting. Created the queen of the moral world, she sat enthroned in the minds of men, maintaining Jehovah's right, until an apostate spirit took away her sceptre, blinded her eyes, and put fetters on her feet, placing her in the prison of depravity, and exulting in her ruin. In this state she lay foaming and raging, proudly asserting her sovereignty, and refusing to own her degradation. She made many struggles to regain her liberty, her honours, and her dominion ; all which only exposed her weakness, and confirmed her slavery. Revelation, like a sun, arose at God's command, and offered its heavenly light ; but Reason had learned to love darkness rather than light, and finding her deformity exposed by the rays of truth, she shrunk back into the midnight gloom

of vain speculation, amusing herself with the dim taper of Philosophy, and submitting to the sceptre of the prince of darkness. *Literature, Science, and Morality*, were summoned to lend their aid to Reason; but, alas! they found her sunk so low, that they could only condole her wretchedness, and mock her feeble struggles, without assisting her to regain her primitive happiness and glory. In the fulness of time the Spirit of the Lord descended from on high, entered the soul where poor proud Reason dwelt in darkness, took her by the hand, and led her to Mount Calvary, laid her prostrate at the foot of the cross, and bedewed her with pardoning blood. Her eyes were opened, her fetters burst asunder, and her pride vanquished, by the glories of that Saviour she had despised and reproached. She became the handmaid of Religion, and accompanied her through all the grand and sublime truths of Revelation, bowing with reverence to every mystery which lay beyond her ken. Thus Reason has been delivered from the most unreasonable slavery, and introduced by grace Divine into the reasonable service of the living God, in which she finds herself infinitely more happy than when she was worshipped as a goddess.

About this period Mr. Irons was called to sustain a great loss in the church over which he was the faithful and affectionate pastor. The Lord saw fit to remove from him, to a considerable distance, another family, who were eminent Christians, very useful in the Church, and also of great assistance to him. The following letter of removal will correctly set forth the feelings and spirit of Mr. Irons on the occasion. It shall, therefore, be given *verbatim* :—

TO THE REV. D. SMITH.

Sawston, March 24, 1817.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

In compliance with your request, and the request of Mr. W. L——, Mrs. M. L——, Mr. W. F. L——, and Miss H. A. L——, I take up my

pen to write their dismissal from that part of the Church of Christ worshipping at Sawston, to that at Brentwood. This I do with a mixed feeling of regret and pleasure. The regret you cannot remove, but the pleasure you will participate in. I must be, indeed, as insensible as a stick or a stone, if I did not *regret the loss of such a family* from my congregation; and I must be quite destitute of the Spirit of my Master, if I did not state, that the riches of Divine grace have appeared conspicuously in their lives and conversation, during the whole time that I have had the pleasure of breaking the bread of life to them. They have been, indeed, the living epistles known and read of all men; and that they may be as eminently useful at Brentwood as they have been at Sawston, is the earnest prayer of

Your affectionate brother in the Lord Jesus Christ,
J. IRONS, Pastor.

P.S.—Thus far officially.

TO THE REV. D. SMITH.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

On the *first page* of this sheet I have employed my pen as a gardener employs his spade—viz., transplanting choice trees; and if I did not truly believe it to be the command of the great Husbandman, I should feel more disposed to murmur than I do at present; and I assure you I have fretted a little about it as it is: for I have some *thistles* and *stinging nettles* in the little garden I am cultivating, which I should be glad to get rid of. But for the trial of my faith, my Master allows them to stand and grow very rank, while He takes away plants of righteousness, of His own right-hand planting, which were the best ornaments in the garden where I am called to labour. You must know, dear brother, that I often petitioned against this deprivation, saying, “Lord, take away these brambles, or take away that barren tree, if thou wilt; but do not deprive me of these useful, flourishing trees.” My Lord replied, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?” I am silenced by His answer, and will endeavour to exchange murmuring, for some profitable reflections.

The plants thus removing are certainly favourite plants with my Divine Master; and, peradventure, He saw that the soil in which they stood was not good enough for them; or, peradventure, they wanted a little more faithful pruning than they had been accustomed to. Being conscious that either, or both of these might be the reasons why He transplanted them, I would cheerfully submit to His will; and earnestly pray that you, dear Sir, may be the honoured instrument of cultivating their precious heaven-born souls, be gladdened by seeing their rapid growth, and often refreshed

by the fruits of righteousness which they bear. Particularly allow me to recommend to your tender care *the younger plants*. They are, indeed, very promising in their appearance, and my earnest desire and prayer is, that they may never be blighted; and I trust that you may be enabled to train them up by the wall of Christian communion, on which the Sun of Righteousness deigns to shine; and may you often pluck some rich wall fruit from their boughs.

I am glad to find, by your letter, that the materials manufactured at the SMITH'S SHOP were of use to you, as well as to me. I have preached both the sermons, with much pleasure and profit; but that one on backsliding in heart appears to have been singularly owned of God; and I believe much good was done by it. May you, my dear brother, never lack *fire* when you work at your forge; and when you get what the smiths call "*good heat*," send me a little of it in a sheet of paper, that my poor cold heart may be warmed thereby. The little opposition that you have met with, I have always considered as a *file*, and you know that is a very useful thing in a *smith's shop*, especially when any of his materials get a little rusty. I have found, in many instances, that while we are zealously engaged in our Master's work, He will not be backward in taking care of us; and if we could trust *more fully all our concerns in His hands*, we should have more peace in our minds, and more success in His cause.

That every new covenant blessing may rest on you and yours, is the prayer of

Your faithful and affectionate brother in the Lord Jesus Christ,

J. IRONS.

TO MRS. IRONS.

Bath, May 15, 1817.

* * * * My opinion concerning Bath is not altered since first formed. I do not think it designed that I should settle here, *though the people wish it*. I long to return to my beloved home, but remember I am on God's errand! Oh, for an increase of zeal in *His* cause, who gave His life a ransom for my soul! I have left the bosom of my dear companion for awhile, to promote His glory; but He left the bosom of His heavenly Father, to work out my *complete salvation*. I am labouring for Him amidst *admiration, applause*, and in the *enjoyment of every temporal comfort*; He completed His work for my sake amidst *reproach, contempt, privation*, and *indescribable sufferings*. Oh! let this thought reconcile our minds to temporary trials and separations.

TO MRS. IRONS.

Bath, June 5, 1817.

* * * * The people at Bath want me as their pastor. Do pray over it. I do not know what the Lord intends to do with me; but I do desire to place myself at His disposal, and act in that way which shall best promote His glory and the good of souls.

June 20, 1817.

* * * * On Sabbath Day (the 22nd,) I have to preach a sermon to the young. *Think of*, and pray for, me. How singularly does God crown my labours with success, among the *young especially*, wherever I go. I really think God has met with some here already. Oh, for a heart to love Him more, and a tongue to praise Him better! Christ crucified is the joy of my heart, and the theme of my sermons. May He give me many souls for my hire, and seals to my ministry, while I am labouring in this part of His vineyard.

Mr. Irons supplied the pulpit at Portland Chapel, Bath, during the months of May and June, 1817; and having finished his engagement there, proceeded to Devonport, where he had been requested to occupy the pulpit for several weeks; and while there, he writes:—

TO MRS. IRONS.

Plymouth Dock, July 5, 1817.

* * * * Now I commend you to our covenant God, entreating you to remember, that every trial we pass through is designed to purify us, and that our dear Jesus sits as the Refiner, and will not suffer us to be hurt; but when He has tried us, He will bring us forth as gold. Trust in Him, live near Him, and cast all your cares upon Him. It is astonishing how the Lord blesses my poor labours. The people are very kind. Oh! may they love my *Master*, and feel the power of His grace in their hearts. Talk with your *heavenly Husband* daily; remember our engagement to besiege the throne at the *same hour*. And may the Lord give me to see very distinctly, the movement of the cloudy pillar. I would not go a step, if I knew it, contrary to His holy will. Where the cloud moves, there must I follow; but, while it remains here, I dare not leave for another spot.

TO MRS. IRONS.

July 18, 1817.

* * * * May you and I, my dear, be followers of them who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises. Live near the

Lord in secret, and then all shall be well. We are indeed passing through a world of woes, but we are under the care—yea, in the *hand*—of a covenant God. And oh! delightful thought, His sacred covenant must be violated, before we can be injured essentially; and hence we are eternally secure. His love cannot alter *towards us*.

What a mercy to have a Divine Guide, and to be enabled to follow Him whithersoever He goeth! If I did not believe that all things were ordered according to my Father's will, I should be miserable in the extreme; but, blessed be God, I know that the bounds of *our* habitation are fixed by Jehovah, as well as *our* steps directed by Him.

In October, 1817, while Mr. Irons was at Plymouth Dock, supplying a few weeks, he sent in his resignation to the Church at Sawston. The following is a copy:—

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are in Church fellowship at Sawston. Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The signal blessing which has attended my poor labours among you, and the constant affection which you have manifested towards me, renders a separation from you peculiarly trying to my feelings; but, when duty commands, feelings must submit. After much prayer and serious consideration, I am led to believe that my appointed work in Sawston *is done*; therefore, however painful to my mind and yours, I feel it to be my duty to resign my pastoral office among you on the 25th day of March next, 1818. During the ensuing half-year I will either preach to you myself, or be responsible for supplies in my pulpit; and if, among them, the Lord shall send you an acceptable pastor to succeed me, I shall rejoice on your behalf. You will always live in my heart, and share in my prayers; and I trust you will bear me upon your hearts at the throne of grace, until I meet you at the judgment-seat of Christ, where you will be my witnesses that I have travailed in birth for your souls, and that "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God." Most affectionately do I sympathize with you, my dear children in the Lord, of whom I may say with the apostle, "In Christ Jesus have I begotten you, through the gospel."

"Hold fast the form of sound words," which you have heard of me, that I may rejoice, in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain nor laboured in vain.

I am, Brethren,

Your faithful and affectionate Pastor,

J. IRONS.

October 10, 1817.

A MEMOIR OF

TO MRS. IRONS.

Plymouth Dock, October 17, 1817.

* * * * Our future station is as yet unknown to me; but I rejoice to know that the bounds of our habitation are all fixed, and wherever God has a work for me to do, there He will bring me, and be with me Himself, according to His own Divine promise.

TO MRS. IRONS.

Plymouth Dock, October 24, 1817.

* * * * I am surrounded with proofs that the Lord is owning the word. I have preached from Jeremiah xviii. 4. The Lord gave His blessing again; and a poor old woman, near seventy years of age, came to me the other day under very powerful convictions, telling me she was that "marred vessel," and had passed all her life in the service of the devil, and now there could be no hope for her; and I told her she was yet in the potter's hand, and He could make her over again.

"While labouring among my own flock at Sawston, having sent in my resignation, which would take effect on the 25th of March, I felt greatly exercised with regard to my future destiny. I had been led to Bath; and although the Lord blessed the word, I could not feel at home there. I remained two months with the people; they were kind, and even entreated me to remain with them; but I could not feel that Bath was to be my fixed station. I therefore went to Devonport, and preached with great liberty, having been invited to occupy a pulpit there; and God blessed my poor labours to the conversion of some, and to the building up of others in their most holy faith; but the pillar of cloud, after a time, moved again, and led me back to the spot I had started from. I dared not open a door, or use any other means, than seeking direction from the Lord in earnest prayer. This, I bless God, I did constantly. My faith was often hard put to it; yet, blessings on His name, He never put me to shame. He always supplied my *real needs*, directed my steps, and very mercifully preserved me from bringing disgrace on His most holy cause, although sharply tried."

AN ACROSTIC.

INTENDED AS AN ANTIDOTE TO DOUBTS AND FEARS.

W HY should my brother cherish doubts and fears,
 W hen God—our God—the sighing pris'ner hears?
 W hy is thy faith so weak—thy joys so low,
 W hile streams of sov'reign grace from Jesus flow?

I s there no fulness now in Jesu's grace?
 I s there no promise found to meet thy case?
 I s there no sacred balm in Gilead found?
 I s no Physician nigh to heal thy wound?

L ook up, dear friend, to Calv'ry's blood-stain'd tree,
 L et Faith exclaim, "That victim bled for me!"
 L ife, pardon, peace, and joy, are now brought nigh;
 L ove so amazing will not let thee die.

L ook higher still, and in the cov'nant roll,
 L earn to peruse thy name, O ransom'd soul!
 L et unbelief expire at such a sight,
 L ike morning mists before meridian light.

I n Christ, my friend, thy soul is seen secure,
 I n Him you stand complete—so white and pure;
 I n Him alone thy freedom is obtain'd,
 I n Him believe, and joy and peace is gain'd.

A nd can'st thou longer wear the legal bond?
 A rt thou of chains and fetters grown so fond?
 A way with unbelieving—*ifs* and *can'ts*;
 A drop of precious blood supplies thy wants.

M ercy has spread her wings around thy soul,
 M uch has she done thy passions to control;
 M ore she is pledged to do, as acts of love—
 M ost she reserves to be enjoy'd above.

L ive on thy Christ, by faith admire His charms;
 L ike holy Simeon, clasp Him in thy arms;
 L ean on His bosom, like beloved John;
 L ove Him supremely, and bid fears begone.

E ach Bible promise shines in Jesu's face,
 E ach gospel doctrine testifies His grace;
 E ach drop of blood affords a powerful plea,
 E ach cov'nant blessing is design'd for thee.

M atchless compassion! Hark! 'tis Gabriel shouts;
 M atchless ingratitude! the sinner doubts;
 M atchless the unbelief that plagues thee so!
 M atchless the faith that conquers such a foe!

O may thy faith, my friend, each hour increase ;
 O may thy groundless doubts for ever cease ;
 O may thy soul on Jesus daily feed ;
 O may His Spirit make you free indeed.

N one can condemn, whom Jesus justifies,
 N or hurt the soul His Spirit sanctifies ;
 N o ! they shall all before His face appear,
 N or William Lemon's name be absent there.

Your faithful and affectionate Pastor,

JOSEPH IRONS.

THE LARK.

FROM yonder enclosure of corn
 How early I see the lark rise ;
 As tho' she look'd downward with scorn,
 And soar'd to inhabit the skies.

She holds forth instruction to me,
 Rebuking my grov'ling desire ;
 Her upward-bound progress I see,
 And long like the lark to aspire.

Oh, could I by faith stretch the wing,
 To my nest no longer confined ;
 Like her I would rise up and sing,
 And leave all my sorrows behind.

But when like the lark I am blest,
 And rise to commune with my God,
 Like her I soon sink to my nest,
 Or grovel again in the clod.

O when will the harvest time come,
 And reapers destroy my vile nest ?
 I'll wing my way up, till at home,
 In Jesu's dear bosom I rest.

There, soaring and singing in bliss,
 Inhaling the air of His love,
 Forgetting all glories but His,
 And learning the notes of the dove.

A PENSIVE SOLILOQUY.

AH! *lonely scene*, remote from *those* I love—
 Unknown to all, but my best Friend above,
 By Providence sent down to Plymouth Dock,
 Far from my *dear companion*; and my flock,
 It is a kind of banishment to me,
 And must be so, till I my home can see.
 My days hang heavy, and my nights are long,
 While heartfelt sighs still supersede my song.
 Each hour my anxious thoughts to *Sawston* fly—
 There all my earthly joys and comforts lie;
 And if my feet could move as quick as thought,
 My body soon to *Sawston* would be brought.
 My heart is there, and there I fain would be;
 For there the object dwells most dear to me
 Of all that earth or fleeting time contains—
 The partner of my comforts and my pains.
 Dear other self! *entwin'd* about my heart,
 'Tis martyrdom to be so far apart.
 Ye ling'ring weeks, roll on with rapid pace,
 Till I my *dear beloved* shall embrace.
 One thought, and only one, affords relief,
 And bids me mix submission with my grief.
 I'm on an errand for the King of kings,
 Proclaiming great, eternal, precious things!
 Be still, ye rising surges of my mind,
 Unto Jehovah's will become resign'd.
 Who knows but He has sent me here to win
 Some precious souls to Christ, from hell and sin?
 With such a glorious object kept in view,
 I would my languid energies renew;
 My earthly joys and comforts lay aside,
 To preach of Jesus Christ, the crucified.
 If but *one* soul receives His sov'reign grace,
 While I am lab'ring in this distant place,
 'Twill more than recompense for all my pain,
 Till I shall see *my friend*—my flock again.
 Lord, grant me this sweet token of thy love,
 Then I'll this painful providence approve;
 And tho' old nature will recoil and pine,
 I will rejoice, and glory shall be mine.

J. IRONS.

Plymouth Dock, July 21, 1817.

WRITTEN IN CRUDEN'S CONCORDANCE.

WITH God the Holy Spirit for my guide,
 And *Cruden's* useful volume by my side,
 I'll search my Bible—there my Saviour find,
 And still proclaim His glories to mankind.
 His rich atoning blood, and special grace,
 Shall be my constant theme in ev'ry place.
 I'll cast *wood, hay, and stubble*, all aside,
 And nothing preach but Jesus crucified.
 'Tis *Cruden's* kindness points from text to text;
 Without his aid I should be much perplex'd.
 And since he condescends so much to tell,
 Let those who use him, always use him well.

Plymouth, July 19, 1817.

LINES WRITTEN ON BOARD A SCHOONER, NEAR THE
 BREAKWATER, PLYMOUTH SOUND, JULY 28, 1817.

HERE 's life's grand emblem now before my eyes,
 Where waves on waves in quick succession rise.
 But 'tis to me a source of great delight;
 That land—my native land—is still in sight.
 Thus, while time's raging billows round me roll,
 And troubled waters agitate my soul,
 My faith shall keep in view the heavenly shore,
 Where sorrow's surges shall be known no more.
 Yes, that's my native land. While all below
 Uncertain like these mighty waters flow,
 There all is calm; and there I soon shall be,
 And never more be forced to put to sea.
 Thither I'll sail—with weather foul or fair—
 I long to breath the sweet celestial air;
 And when upon the sacred shore I live,
 I'll all the glory to my Captain give.
 Yea, while upon the boist'rous main I ride,
 In His almighty power I will confide.

He can control the restless, raging wind,
 And give composure to the troubled mind.
 Avast! Here's danger nigh.—A vessel moor'd
 Is foul of us! Our Captain's not on board.
 What shall we do? He hails us! Oh, He's near!
 He comes to help us, and dismiss our fear!
 Nor shall He from us go ashore again,
 While we are sailing on this boist'rous main.
 If He commands the ship, and holds the helm,
 All is secure; no waves shall overwhelm.
 If Jesus with me sails, I'll stand on deck,
 Smiling at danger—fearless of a wreck.
 My faith shall hold Him fast; He will not go,
 Nor leave His Church; His promise tells me so.
 Tho' reeling to and fro, and tempest-tost,
 With Christ on board I know I can't be lost.
 In cabin, or on deck, we'll feast and sing;
 Safe into harbour, He'll the vessel bring.

FRIENDSHIP.

TO MRS. IRONS.

A FRIENDSHIP form'd with motives pure,
 And bound by special grace secure,
 Is pleasant—but 'tis rare;
 But such, I trust, is yours and mine,
 Whose hearts around each other twine
 In daily fervent prayer.

A friendship form'd by God's own hand,
 Steady in life and death wilt stand,
 And be renew'd above.
 'Midst changing scenes—it changes not;
 When fawning flattery lies forgot;
 It will immortal prove.

Such friendship as will hearts unite
 Will always be exposed to spite
 In such a world as this;
 But still, 'tis pleasing to the Lord,
 And with it brings its own reward,
 A taste of real bliss.

A MEMOIR OF

Such friendship can't abate and halt
 At *every word* and *every fault*
 Observed by eagle eyes ;
 But buries what it cannot cure,
 And will much injury endure,
 If injuries arise.

Such friendship will with zeal defend,
 A smooth or rugged path attend,
 And never cease to act.
 It warms the heart in which it lives,
 Retains the sacred heat it gives,
 Nor can its vows retract.

Such friendship, undisturb'd might dwell,
 But for that trying word—farewell—
 That word disturbs its peace.
 But, though pronounced by you and me,
 Our friendship cannot cease to be ;
 Oh, may it still increase.

Such friendship, with extensive hand,
 Stretches its cord o'er sea and land,
 And fickleness disdains ;
 Farewell is not its funeral ode,
 The candid mind is its abode,
 And there it lives and reigns.

Such friendship thrives on bended knees—
 'Twill profit souls—Jehovah please,
 And ne'er exhaust its store.
 May we such friendship realize
 Until we meet above the skies,
 And say farewell no more.

Such friendship in each other's heart
 Will never, never let us part—
 It holds by bonds unseen.
 Abroad, at home, in field, or street,
 We will at Jesus' footstool meet,
 Though mountains intervene.

Our dear brother fully proved the truth of God's word, "My grace is sufficient for thee," while pursuing his course. Called in the order of Providence to travel from place to place, to preach Christ crucified, Satan tempting, the world frowning, unbelief striving for the mastery, and an expensive family (on account of being so numerous), looking up to him for support, the door at Sawston evidently closing and, at this period, no prospect of another opening, surely his faith was sharply exercised. He could not feel at home at Bath or Plymouth, although well attended, and the people earnestly requesting him to remain with them. He had made it a matter of prayer, he had sought direction of the Lord, and would not take a step (if he knew it) contrary to His will. Yet how wonderful are the ways of Jehovah; He has said, "He openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. Behold I have set before *thee* an open door, and no man can shut it." The future steps of our friend fully proved the truth of this Divine declaration—to his own satisfaction, and the glory of his Lord and Master.

"At the opening of the year 1818, while wondering as to what steps the Lord intended me to take, having not the most distant idea, at this time, as to where my future lot was to be cast, I received, quite unexpectedly, an invitation from CAMBERWELL, SURREY, to supply for one Sabbath-day at Camden Chapel, which was at that time a Dissenting Chapel. This was very mysterious to me, as I knew nothing of Camberwell, or of the person who wrote the letter to me, it being signed, 'Joseph Flint.' But while I was musing on its contents, as to the steps I should take, and asking direction of the Lord, it was followed by another, from the Rev. Robert Stodhart—who had, on former occasions, been a warm friend to me; and also the honoured instrument, in the hand of the Lord, in bringing my dear wife to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, which rendered him doubly dear to me and mine—advising me to accept the invitation. Accordingly I engaged to preach on the

last Sabbath in January, 1818; and, at their request, I opened my commission at Camberwell on the preceding Wednesday evening, Jan. 21. This mysterious providence was afterwards explained to me thus:—Mr. Flint, who invited me, was the managing trustee of Camden Chapel, and on intimate terms with Mr. Stodhart; and one day was conversing with him on the difficulty he found in getting men of truth to supply the pulpit at Camden Chapel, Camberwell. Mr. S. then mentioned my name, and advised Mr. F. to send for me, if only for a Sabbath, but he replied that there was a difficulty in the way; I was so far from them, and he was determined never to invite a preacher to Camden pulpit until he himself had heard him preach elsewhere, as he wanted a man of sterling truth and character. Mr. S. had tried all he could to persuade him to give me at least a trial, but in vain—he was fixed and firm in the determination he had come to; but, just as he was in the act of retiring, he said, ‘Good bye; you had better invite my friend Irons; he is one of Gunn’s converts.’ This inadvertent expression was enough; it touched the spring which set all the machinery in motion, so that nothing has been able to stop it to this day. The reason was simply this: Mr. Flint was most affectionately attached to the memory of dear Alphonsus Gunn, so that he could not resist the advice given him, to hear one who had been called by Divine grace under his ministry. This was manifestly the finger of God. Camden Chapel had then been long in a very unsettled state, and the hearers accustomed to hear a great variety of preachers, consequently, after each service, the general inquiry was, ‘Who is coming next?’ and a rumour had been widely circulated, that a gentleman from Cambridge was coming, my residence and charge being at that time at Sawston, near to Cambridge. This produced much excitement and talk among the congregation. The spiritual part were alarmed, expecting to hear *mathematics* instead of divinity, and classic lore instead of experimental godliness. These, however,

were pleasingly disappointed, when they heard the *rustic village preacher* open his commission in the 13th verse of the 22nd chapter of Revelations, ‘I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.’”

Mr. Irons’ character as a minister of Christ, was fully developed in the bold and unvarnished way in which he entered Camberwell. He studied not to please at the expense of truth; but boldly and faithfully, yet very affectionately, told out all the truth, “whether men would bear or forbear.” So that he could say, with Paul, “I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.” He says, “A deep impression had been felt in my own mind, that God had some great work for me in this neighbourhood, which made me resolve to declare, in the most *unreserved* way and manner, all the counsel of God in the very first sermon, proclaiming Jesus as first and last in the whole economy of salvation, to the utter rejection of proud free-will and human merit; so that neither the hearers nor the trustees might be mistaken in the preacher whom they had invited. The effect produced by the first sermon was marvellous, and the public excitement was very prodigious; so that on the following Lord’s Day, Camden Chapel was thronged to the doors, and the strange multitude were addressed from Isa. lx. 13—‘I will make the place of my feet glorious.’ And, truly, the promise was then and there fulfilled; for a breathless attention, a deep solemnity, and floods of tears, proclaimed the Lord’s presence, and the place of His feet was glorious indeed. Mr. Flint came to me, as soon as the service was over, in a perfect extacy of soul, and requested me to prolong my stay at that place, assuring me that he had been for years praying for that, which he had that morning realized, bearing his testimony that the ‘gospel had *then* been preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.’ The impression which I had felt, that God had a great work for me at Camberwell, was now deepened and confirmed, and I was convinced that it was from the Lord; so that after

seeking direction from above, I agreed to lengthen my visit *three weeks* more, during which I preached four times a-week to crowded congregations, experiencing much of the presence of the Lord, and witnessing great power going forth with the word, quickening many, who were dead in trespasses and sins, to newness of life, and 'helping them much who had believed through grace;' so that there was manifestly a great revival in vital godliness. This, of course, made Satan angry, and induced him to stir up the enmity of carnal-minded professors to oppose and misrepresent the sacred truths which God was so signally honouring, as they did in the days of the apostles; for the doctrines of grace have always been a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, as it is written, 'They were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming' (Acts xiii. 45). So that the very truths which were 'a savour of life unto life to some, were a savour of death unto death to others.' After I had supplied for three Sabbaths, and had one more to stay to complete my *first engagement* at Camden Chapel, Mr. Flint invited me to take tea with him, in order to enter into further arrangements. I went to his house on Wednesday afternoon, February 11, on my way to the evening lecture, and found the good man a little indisposed, but very cheerful and happy in the enjoyment of the truths which he had been hearing for several weeks past. The only difficulty I heard him complain of, was the trouble he had to preserve the *pure gospel* within the walls of that chapel, and the hostility of some who ought to have assisted him in maintaining the proclamation of free grace there. He conversed with me freely relative to future plans, as if it were already a settled matter that I should be his pastor in that place, the welfare of which lay near his heart, for he really valued a *full gospel*; and then he made engagements with me to supply for five Sabbaths more, leaving *seven weeks* between the two engagements; and when he had written down all particulars, he gave me a

copy, in his own hand-writing, and said, 'I shall not accompany you to the lecture this evening, as I feel poorly, and wish to nurse myself, in anticipation of *another feast* next Lord's Day.'"

Mr. Irons proceeds to say, "I left him at his tea-table, and that was the last time I saw him; for on Lord's Day morning, Feb. 15, when I entered the vestry-room of Camden Chapel, I was informed that he was dangerously ill, and requested that public prayers might be offered up on his behalf. In the evening, I was informed that his life was despaired of; and early on Monday morning I set out to visit him, but was met by a messenger, who told me his ransomed spirit had fled! This was a solemn shock; and I walked, pondering over the mysterious Providence which had removed so valuable a man at such a momentous juncture." Doubtless our dear departed friend could say with the poet,

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform."

The only official man that really loved the truth—the very identical one that invited him to Camberwell—the man as an instrument, on whom Mr. Irons depended for help and patronage (as the other leading men were opposed to him), and who had shown himself so friendly and kind, should be so suddenly taken away, how soon was the dark cloud overspreading his summer's sky. Yet the sequel informs us all was well—real good was to arise out of it. Mr. Irons' future good, and the glory of God, were closely connected with it; but his faith was put to the test, when the lamp of hope burned so dimly. But God says, "This is the way; walk ye in it." There was mercy mixed with the mystery!

Mr. Irons proceeds: "I had just finished my first engagement at Camden Chapel; and having nothing now to detain me officially, I returned to the bosom of my family and flock, expecting daily an invitation to the funeral of the late Mr. Flint; as I was informed that his dying request was, that I should be invited to preach his funeral sermon, and that one of his last

prayers was, *for the sphere of my future labours to be fixed in Camden Chapel*; neither of which requests were granted; for 'another king arose, that knew not *Joseph*,' nor loved Joseph's Lord. I could not *then* see the mercy concealed in that cloud, but have since clearly discovered, that God had provided some better thing for me, and for the dear people who were rallying round me, that we might be organized upon more scriptural principles."

Mr. Irons was accustomed from early life, after the Lord had brought him to know the truth as it is in Jesus, to trace all things up to their source; and although this providence appears gloomy—the cloud dark, he acknowledges, like another Joseph, the hand of the Lord was in it. He did not believe in chance or contingency, but fully believed that, however mysterious it might appear at first sight, "that all things were *working together* for good to them that love God, and to them that are called according to His purpose."

"Several weeks elapsed, and no information reached me; at length there came a cold, stern note, inquiring of me if the late Mr. Flint had made any further engagements with me to supply Camden Chapel, and, if any, to what extent. This surprised me, as I saw Mr. Flint record them, and knew that his books had fallen into the hands of the inquirer. However, I replied, forwarding him a copy of all the dates for which I stood engaged; and at the appointed time (Wednesday evening, April 8), I paid my *second* visit to Camberwell, and preached to crowded congregations until Whit Sunday, May 10, when I received a very uncourteous dismissal from the new treasurer, who could not bear to hear so much about Christ, as I was accustomed to preach. Poor man! I hope the Lord sanctified the calamities which afterwards overtook him, so as to make him more in love with Christ, before he left the world; for it is written, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed at the coming of the Lord.' And while I pity such characters, I rejoice

in this man's testimony, that 'there was *nothing but Christ in my sermons.*'"

Well might Mr. Irons rejoice in this. It was the testimony of one, who could find no other fault with his preaching, than it was full of Christ, and "his walk put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Certainly those who heard him preach until the last, must bear the same testimony. "Alpha and Omega—Christ the first, and Christ the last," was the grand theme. Truly, Christ, in all His offices and covenant responsibility, was exhibited by him on the pole of the gospel; and whenever and wherever he went, he had but one gospel to proclaim—A FULL CHRIST FOR POOR EMPTY SINNERS. And how the Holy Ghost did abundantly own and bless his labours! While the carnal-minded professors took offence at the doctrines of the cross, many were led to embrace the truth, and Christ was to them the all in all. "They that honour me, I will honour," saith the Lord. And while our friend exalted Christ, exhibited Christ, extolled Christ, Divine power attended Divine truth, and numbers cried out, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?" and were pointed by the preacher to a precious Christ, as the all-sufficient Saviour, able and willing to save to the uttermost.

FAREWELL ADDRESS TO HIS LATE CHARGE AT SAWSTON.

Farewell, ye people of my charge,
Whose souls are dear to me;
May God your comforts much enlarge,
And bid your sorrows flee.

Farewell, ye saints who love the Lord,
Both aged sire and youth;
With reverence hear the preached word,
And still hold fast the truth.

Farewell, ye lambs of Jesu's fold,
He'll bear you on His breast;
You shall the Shepherd's face behold,
And be for ever blest.

Farewell, ye careless, harden'd souls,
Who have been often warn'd ;
See ! o'er your head the vengeance rolls,
Which you have often scorn'd.

Farewell, ye Pharisees, who treat
The Saviour with disdain ;
Before the dreadful judgment-seat !
You must meet me again.

Farewell, till that decisive day
When we must meet our God ;
Then, 'midst assembl'd worlds, I'll say,
" I'm clear of *all your blood.*"

J. IRONS.

“ ‘ At that time there was no small stir about that way.’ The word of God had taken effect in the souls of very many, imparting spiritual life and comfort, which produced strong affection to the instrument ; and that was expressed largely, both in *word* and *deed*, by those ‘ whose hearts the Lord had opened.’ The general impression throughout the congregation was that I should be their pastor ; and, had the decision rested with the *unbiassed* choice of the regenerated people of God, I do not think there would have been a single dissentient voice among them. But the appointment or rejection of a minister rested wholly with about nine trustees ; among whom *one* individual possessed sufficient influence to command a majority against the wishes of nearly the whole congregation. The people being thus disappointed (not to say insulted) had no other alternative but to sacrifice their spiritual privileges to arbitrary power, or to provide themselves with another place of worship. Several fruitless attempts were made to induce the trustees to yield to the wishes of the people ; arguing with them, that though the trust-deed invested them with absolute power, yet, in the sight of God, they ought to use it in accordance with the unanimous wishes of His people. But all was in vain ; and the congregation, who were highly

grieved, were driven to the erection of a new chapel. A committee was soon formed, and subscriptions opened. God smiled upon the effort—the people gave largely, and soon the amount was considerable.”

Dear reader, how fully was that text fulfilled which says that “the wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder He will restrain.” The opposition they met with God employed to the furtherance of His cause. But no thanks to the instruments who thus conducted themselves; they were determined to turn out the truth, but God was determined to bring it in; and He says, “I will work, and who shall let it;” “Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.” God did, and God will, protect His own truth; but one thing is quite certain, that wherever it is fully and faithfully proclaimed Satan will raise up opposition against it; but Satan’s rage must fall before Jehovah’s power—who can withstand Him, or frustrate His divine plans?

“Meanwhile an asylum was sought for the scattered congregation, and several places of worship opened to receive the people and their ejected minister; but persecution pursued, and shortly the whole of them were closed against us, so that in a few weeks *we were driven out of four different places*. At length, we hired ‘a large upper room,’ which had been occupied as a carpenter’s shop, and which stood on the site now called Verandah Place, Church Street; and, having obtained a place of our own, we intended quietly to worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences, and the direction of His word. But even there the spirit of persecution followed us. They advised the parish authorities to prosecute us for worshipping in an unlicensed place—but all in vain; for we had too much experience of the enmity of the carnal mind to trust to the tender mercies of the wicked, which are cruel. We had therefore availed ourselves of the protection of the law, before we commenced public worship there. We expended about £40 to make the building tenantable; and there we worshipped God during the time

that Grove Chapel was building—and there our Divine Lord and Master put the same honour upon it, as He did upon the large upper room at Jerusalem (Luke xxii. 12), for when we had ‘made ready,’ He came and manifested Himself to us, and was ‘known there in the breaking of bread.’ Being thus housed for the time, and worshipping, like Paul, ‘in our own hired house, receiving all that came in, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding us’ (Acts xxviii. 30), it was here that we first turned our attention to the organization of a Christian Church, upon New Testament principles; for the people at Camden Chapel had been entire strangers to church order or discipline. The people were anxiously inquiring of me what steps should be taken; and I saw that it was a critical moment with me, for my future comfort and success seemed suspended upon the discipline that should be adopted. I set myself to examine the New Testament with fervent prayer, and came to the conclusion (which has never yet been shaken) that the only form of Church government deducible from the New Testament is that of CONGREGATIONAL EPISCOPACY. Both Scripture and history represent every ORDAINED PASTOR as ruling in all things spiritual within the sphere of his own labours, but no further; and holding his office distinct from every thing secular, and never usurping authority over each other * * * * With these principles fixed on my mind, and after fervent prayer, I sat down and wrote the articles upon which our whole discipline is based. I merely made a rough sketch, and then submitted them to the inspection of my revered pastor, the Rev. Griffith Williams, of Gate Street Chapel, in whose long experience and heavenly wisdom I placed great confidence. The aged saint quietly read them down, and then, dropping them on the table, he exclaimed, ‘Why, Joseph, where did you get these?’ I replied, ‘From heaven, in answer to prayer.’ He then said, ‘Go and

organize a Church with those articles, and prosperity with peace are as secure as human laws can make it.' The correctness of his opinion has been proved for many years."

ARTICLES OF FAITH AND PRACTICE,

AGREED UPON BY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ASSEMBLING IN GROVE
CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL.

1. WE believe in the existence of one Supreme Being in three Persons, co-equal and co-eternal, as revealed in Scripture.
2. We believe in the total depravity of human nature by the fall of Adam, our federal head.
3. We believe in the absolute and unconditional election of "a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues," in the Person of Christ, unto eternal life.
4. We believe in the perfect, satisfactory, and meritorious atonement of the Son of God incarnate, by which alone sin can be expiated, and sinners saved.
5. We believe in the absolute necessity of the influence of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify our souls, and qualify us for the enjoyment of God and heaven.
6. We believe that those whom the Father hath chosen, whom the Son hath redeemed, and whom the Holy Spirit sanctifies, shall assuredly obtain everlasting life.
7. We hold it to be an inestimable privilege to be under the care of a pastor, called and qualified of God, to "feed our souls with knowledge and understanding;" and to the care and superintendence of such a pastor we resolve to commit all our spiritual concerns, as the watchman of our souls.
8. We consider it desirable and important, that deacons be chosen from among ourselves, to superintend the temporal affairs of the Church, whose office shall be purely secular, and whose number shall be regulated by the increase and decision of the Church.
9. We believe that the ordinance of baptism is to be administered by the application of water to the persons who believe in Jesus, and their infant seed; and the ordinance of the Lord's supper, to be received by those only who, from the principle of grace in their hearts, bring forth the fruits of righteousness.
10. We resolve, that no persons shall be admitted to Church fellowship with us, but such as give satisfactory evidence to our pastor that they are

the subjects of the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit, and who adorn their profession with a holy and circumspect life.

11. Conscious of the infinite importance of brotherly love, and aware of the evils which arise in the absence of this God-like principle, we purpose, by the grace of God, to consider it our duty to give, and our privilege to receive, brotherly admonitions (in the spirit of meekness), whenever the infirmities of our flesh shall render them necessary, that we may be helpers to one another in the Divine life.

12. We consider it our duty and privilege to be constant and regular in our attendance upon the public means of grace, *together as one family*, that our influence and example may be conducive to the prosperity of the Church, and the prosperity of the Church be apparent in the prosperity of our souls; that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified, and the heart of our pastor encouraged.

“I felt truly encouraged by the testimony of so holy a man. His judgment, in my opinion, was of great value. I therefore proceeded to lay them before the Committee and the few persons (only twelve in number,) who had engaged to unite together as a gospel Church. No sooner did they peruse them, than they one and all were not only satisfied, but delighted with them. We therefore agreed to call a public meeting on the 21st of December, 1818. The meeting was convened at the above time, and my dearly-beloved friend and brother, the Rev. Griffith Williams, kindly consented to preach on the occasion. The meeting was held in ‘the large upper room,’ and my revered pastor preached from 2 Cor. viii. 5—‘They first gave their ownelves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.’ Truly, the unctuous power of the Holy Ghost was resting on the preached word. To many—very many—it was a memorable evening—a time not soon to be forgotten; indeed, many are *now alive* who feel a sacred delight and holy joy in speaking of it to this day, and the savour of it seems revived in my own soul. Yes; the Holy Ghost then gave us a blessed earnest of the mercies and blessings that have been daily showering down upon us ever since. After the sermon, the Church

Articles were publicly read, and received by the candidates present with marks of satisfaction and expressions of delight. Having proceeded thus far, the Church was organized by the twelve persons being united in fellowship. The Lord's Supper was then administered; and thus our solemn union ratified in the face of all the opposition that we had to meet with. Having obtained two important things—the positive proof of the presence of our Lord and Master, and a place (*pro. tem.*) to worship in—the subscriptions went on briskly. One, as a sample, may be recorded:—‘An old lady, a friend of the late Mr. Flint, who used to rise early in the morning (say four o'clock), and after spending an hour in earnest prayer to God for a blessing to rest on her labour of love, she went forth to meet the working-classes who had been profited, under the preached word, through my instrumentality, to obtain their donations toward the erection of the new chapel; and God so abundantly blessed her labours in this laudable way, that at one time she brought to the treasurer a sum amounting to £107. The Lord be praised for His goodness to us! It is only due to the Committee to say, that they were diligently in search for a piece of ground for the new sanctuary. They had to meet with much opposition. Nor is it to be wondered at, that Satan should oppose that work which acted with so much power against him; but all his rage was in vain. God had said, ‘My purpose shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.’ God rewarded their activity. The ground was taken, the plans were approved of, the estimate was signed, to the no small mortification of our persecutors. This was evidently the spot where God had designed that we should meet, and that He would meet with us, and bless us. On the 15th of March, 1819, my dear friend and brother in the Lord, who was so warmly disposed toward us—Mr. Samuel Carter—laid the foundation-stone; and he gave ample proof of his love as long as he lived; and the 15th of March I shall never forget as long as I remain on earth. The love of my friends and

the malice of our foes, were very conspicuous. None of the neighbouring ministers would, or did, associate with us on that day. I could say, with Paul, 'At my first answer, no man stood by me.' Therefore it fell to my lot to deliver the address at the ceremony of laying the stone, which I did from Ezra iii. 10, 11; but, thanks to the Lord, whoever forsook me, He did not. And while I was addressing the numbers who were gathered together on the occasion, He manifested His power by breaking the heart of a poor sinner, who came from a house close by, to see what was going on amidst the crowd. This was proved, in after life, to be of God. God had engaged to bless, the devil had engaged to curse; but sovereign power overcame Satanic rage. I will work, and who shall let it? It is a hard thing to fight against God—to oppose Deity; and He has said, 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.' Two important objects were now realized—a Christian Church was organized, and the stone laid of Grove Chapel; and surely, under circumstances very like to those of the temple in the time of Ezra of old, our prosperity appeared to enrage our foes. The lord of the manor was induced to place a bar across the bottom of the Grove (claiming it as his private road), to prevent the builder carting materials to the ground for the erection of the chapel. But we were enabled to surmount this act of unkindness; and it only tended to fire our zeal in the cause of God. We saw that the Lord of Hosts was with us, although the lord of the manor was against us. We had, therefore, no just cause to fear. At this time God was blessing His word to the souls of the people in the carpenter's shop, or 'upper room.' Many were converted to God; and some of the number are now living witnesses of the truth of what I pen. To others, it was the gate of heaven. Brotherly love prevailed, the unction of the Holy One rested on the preacher, and the preached word. The building went on with great rapidity; it was only four months and five days from the laying of

the first stone until it was publicly opened for worship. A building 70 feet by 50 feet, erected in so short a time, and yet no injury, or what is called accident, occurred to any of the workmen. It was quite manifest 'that this work was wrought of our God' (Neh. vi. 16); so that even our enemies were cast down in their own eyes, and were at a loss how to proceed with their hostility. While the building was rising with great rapidity, the Church was increasing still faster. We had only begun with twelve, as already stated; yet, in a few months, they had increased to nearly *one hundred members*, before the opening of the new chapel; many of them had been called by Divine grace in the carpenter's shop. So great was the blessing enjoyed by many in this humble temporary place, that they were actually unwilling to quit it; it had proved a Bethel to their souls."

MY DEAR BROTHER AND FELLOW-LABOURER IN THE VINEYARD,

I received your allegorical epistle, and fully intended to have answered immediately, but a multitude of things have prevented me so doing. However, I will now attempt a line to you the first thing on Monday morning, lest another week should elapse without writing to my friend. Your allegory of the garden is an important and also an instructive one; and every step I take in my Master's garden, opens to my view new scenes of labour and new sources of regret and sorrow; but, blessed be God, I have also much to encourage me. Old plants appear to be shooting out afresh, and many young plants have been lately introduced, *which, at present*, look very promising, and require much watering and care; but, alas! I find weeds grow faster than choice plants, both in my own heart and in the hearts of others. The nettle—spiritual pride, the switch unbelief, and the thistle of lukewarmness, are among the most troublesome that I meet with; they mar my own enjoyment, and injure the growth of the tender plants in the garden, and much deface the beauty. As to weeding, I find it easiest after a shower; but, after all, I cannot get rid of them. I must, therefore, leave it until my Lord and Master shall come into *His garden*, and order all *His* plants to be removed to the *upper garden*, where weeds cannot grow, and where winter is not known—but all is perpetual spring. Notwithstanding the

present imperfect state of things, it would do your heart good to see the number of thriving plants I have around me, which are my glory and joy. Some few of them have been transplanted from other gardens, but most of them I have had the honour of raising from the pure seed my Master has given me to sow in His garden, called "the incorruptible word of life." These, of course, I am partial to, and take much pleasure in training and watering; and they reward my labour, for their fruits of holiness abound to the glory of God, and send forth a sweet odour through the whole garden. They indeed gain the admiration of surrounding friends, and the slander of surrounding foes. Thanks to the great Husbandman, that He keeps up the garden wall, and that the trees thrive well. By the help of my Master, I purpose to lay the axe at the root of the old trees of Formality and Hypocrisy, and hope to clear the ground of them. I daily take the threefold cord—viz., the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—to bind together the tender plants of His right-hand planting, and endeavour to shelter them from the weeds of ridicule, envy, and temptation. Further, my dear brother, I often request my Master to take a walk with me in His own garden, to see how the plants thrive; and I have derived so much advantage from His company, that I am resolved never to go to work alone, if He will condescend to be with me. Ah! He tells me when to dig, and when to sow, and when to use my pruning-knife; yea, His very looks impart vigour to my soul, and I can always do ten times as much work when He is present than during His absence; yea, more, I can do nothing without Him. He has promised to raise my wages; He calls me to Him, and says, "Go, work to-day in my vineyard;" and I reply, "So I will, Lord, if thou wilt give me strength so to do." He immediately says, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." And then I say, "Hinder me not." And it is now my determination to employ all my days and remaining strength in His service, depending wholly on His promised presence; and sweetly I have enjoyed it in seasons by-gone, when He has communed with me by the way. I expect to meet with thorns, briers, barren trees, and the like, and some little foxes, which spoil the vines. My work increases daily; but what my hands find to do, I do with all my might. I must close this garden epistle, by inviting you and your helpmate to come and see my garden, and taste some of the fruits; trusting that your visit may be of mutual benefit to us, encouraging us to persevere in our Master's employ.

And remain,

Your very affectionate fellow-labourer in the Garden of the Lord,

J. IRONS.

Rev. S. A. D——.

We have followed our dear departed father and friend thus far, through evil report and through good report—the honoured, though humble, but truly faithful servant of his Lord and Master—through many changes and vicissitudes. Sometimes the sky was all clear, the prospect promising, his heart cheered, and he was enabled to gird up his loins, trim his lamp, and pursue his way, unfurling the banner of the cross, exalting Jesus, and singing,

“Then I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.”

Nothing appears to have chilled his love or prevented his usefulness. Bold, valiant, and faithful for God and truth, he was determined that “Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death.” He gave lively proof that he was the Lord’s servant, that his Master’s cause was near his heart, and that grace was given him according to his day; he was not left to work alone. At last the day arrived, one of the most eventful days in all his life—the long-looked for day, when that holy and beautiful house should be opened for the public worship of God, and a larger sphere of usefulness present itself to his view, and the voice of his covenant God be heard, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” It is faithfully described by his own pen:—

“The day fixed for the opening of Grove Chapel was Tuesday, July 20, 1819, and the brethren who preached on the occasion as follows:—The Rev. Robert Stodhart in the morning, Rev. Joseph Irons in the afternoon, and the Rev. Griffiths Williams in the evening. The day was peculiarly marked with the Divine presence, and the collections made after the services were *very liberal*. One fact I must record, inasmuch as it proves that there is such a thing as the fellowship of the Spirit in the household of faith. Some days previous to the opening of the Chapel, I had been very earnest in prayer that the Lord would fix my mind upon some suitable portion of His word, as the basis of my first

sermon in His house. And as I was pacing the isle in the then unfinished building, that precious promise came to my mind with peculiar force, 'Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually' (1 Kings ix. 3). I felt that I had received this in direct answer to prayer, that it was from the Lord. I therefore turned into one of the pews, and there studied my first sermon for Grove Chapel, with peculiar liberty and savour, fully anticipating the fulfilment of the promise; when, strange, yet not more strange than true, the same day at evening, a good man, one of my hearers in the 'upper room' thus accosted me, 'Sir, I have been praying earnestly for the Lord's blessing upon that building, and the answer I have received is this, *Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.*'" This good man was one of the choicest saints of the living God; he was personally known to the writer of this Memoir, and often has he had it from his own lips, for he felt a sacred pleasure in speaking of the same until he was removed to everlasting glory a few years since. Mr. Irons states—"This singular coincidence gave great encouragement to me, and confirmed my faith relative to my future prosperity; and the event has proved that our highest expectations were far more circumscribed than God's designs."

The chapel having been opened, the Church organized, and all things done decently and in order, we find our dear friend throwing all the energies of his soul and body into the work. The settled pastor in a large Chapel and a thriving Church, he storms the strongholds of Satan, exposes Arminianism, takes the crest from proud free will, exalts a precious Christ, is made the honoured instrument in bringing many "out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel," and "helping many who had believed through grace." He neither courted the smiles nor did he fear the frowns of any. His sermons were scriptural, his method of dividing his discourses unique and attractive, his remarks searching and lasting. He stooped to take by

the hand the weakest babe in the Lord's family ; he had milk for them, but it was the sincere milk of the word ; and perhaps no man's ministry has been more singularly owned of God in the conversion of sinners, especially the young, than our friend Joseph Irons, and few, if any, brought forth more savoury food for the old-established Christian than he did. He has said from the pulpit, at different times, that " he would rather be a *scavenger* in the streets of London, than bear the name of a Christian minister, and yet be doing nothing for God. A commission from the Most High for the work, and the broad seal of *His* approbation in the work, were essential credentials for a labourer in Christ's vineyard. A faithful minister of Christ will find a use for every doctrine in the Scriptures, every promise, and every precept in the word of God. Again, tell me no more of ministers killing themselves in their Master's work—it cannot be ! all their work must be done before they quit the world ; and, when it is done, the sooner they get home to glory the better for them. It has often been said of some of God's ministers, that ' they have been taken away in the midst of their usefulness.' This cannot be true. God gives them their work to do, and will not call them home until they have finished it, and accomplished all that He had marked out for them to do in His Church and vineyard." Nothing could deter him from throwing all his mind and powers into the work of the ministry. He was not unfrequently censured for labouring so hard, telling him that it would bring him to a premature grave. Surely few men laboured as hard as he did, and none more so ; but he was blessedly supported in the work, and never felt so happy as when in the pulpit proclaiming the grand doctrines of grace to attentive hearers. He was a honest, hard-working servant of the living God. What he was in early life, we find him up to the time God was pleased to call him home—he was not given to change. As a preacher, his grand theme and business was exalting Christ—pointing to Christ as the

only hope set before us. His first text at Camden Chapel was "Alpha and Omega," and the grand truths he then brought forth, were a fair specimen of all his sermons. Yet, strange must that man's experience be who could not find the counterpart thereof, in the sermons of our friend and brother. He was DOCTRINAL, EXPERIMENTAL, and PRACTICAL. All the doctrines of grace he fully insisted upon. He would lead back the minds of his hearers to the ancient council of peace, before all worlds, the everlasting, immutable love of God the Father in the choice of the Church in the Person of His Son our Saviour, the *responsibility* of Jesus for all His people, all that the Father gave to Him before time; that, by virtue of His engagements, thousands of Old Testament saints were admitted home to eternal bliss, long before His incarnation. He having entered into covenant engagements that He would, in the fulness of time, put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, which He did most blessedly when "He died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Most fully and faithfully would he insist on the meritorious blood of Christ being so precious, that it was impossible for one soul to perish for whom Christ died—that He should "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," both with the quantity and the quality of them—that when He had satisfied justice on the tree, He passed through the tomb—for it was not possible for Him to be holden of death—He therefore triumphed over death, hell, and the grave; "being delivered for our offences, He was raised again for our justification;" and having blessed His disciples, He arose to glory, there to plead His merits on the behalf of the Church until the end of time. Again, how the Holy Ghost descended, in the fulness of time, to regenerate the soul, and apply the blood of the covenant with *irresistible* power to the hearts and consciences of poor sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, imparting *light, life, love, and liberty* to them; that what the Holy Ghost graciously began He would blessedly com-

plete—the final perseverance of the saints was certain. He was a sound Trinitarian. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in their covenant offices and characters, were brought forth most prominently in all his discourses. The writer can bear testimony to it for twenty-five years past, and possesses evidence of those, who have had the privilege of knowing him even longer than he has. Wherever he stood forth, the room, the barn, the carpenter's shop, or the noble chapel, before his own or any other congregation, he was full of truth, speaking under the unction of the Spirit. The seeking soul was directed—the cast down comforted—the careless cautioned—the backslider brought back—the hungry fed—the weakling nourished—and growing saints encouraged day by day. He preached what he believed to be in perfect accordance with God's word; yea, more, he practised what he proclaimed—it was carried out in his life and conduct. What he was in the pulpit he was in the parlour—A CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN, ever maintaining that grace led to holiness; and could appeal unto the assembled hearers as Paul did, "The things that ye have heard and seen in me do, and the God of peace shall be with you." He was a man of great *natural* talent, and all he had, he used in the cause of his Lord and Master. He was abstemious, active, and aspiring after further usefulness. What he did, he did with his whole heart; and what was said of him while dying, by a gentleman in my hearing, who had known him nearly forty years, will show that he had somewhat of Paul's firmness when he said, "None of these things move me." His friend said, "I fully believe that all the powers of Europe could not change Mr. Irons's opinion, if he believed himself to be correct in the views he had taken." There was in all his life one unbroken chain both in *doctrine, discipline, and deportment*. The accommodating principle, or rather want of principle, exhibited by so many, grieved him much, but he was a stranger to it himself, exclaiming, "My heart is fixed, O God, trusting in thee." During his

ministry it may be safely asserted, that he was a very laborious man. He has said often, that he thought idleness *one of the greatest vices a man could be guilty of*. From the early hour he left his bed in the morning, until he retired to rest at night, he was always busy—independent of all the works he was the honoured author of, which may be hereafter named for the information of strangers, upon a fair calculation he must have preached nothing short of *eleven thousand sermons*, besides all other public engagements, which were numerous. During the summer months he would often preach four times on the Sabbath day—before breakfast, at half-past six, in London ; again at half-past ten at Grove Chapel ; in the afternoon, in the city, at three ; and at his own chapel in the evening, at half-past six ; sometimes three or four sermons, at various places, during the week, besides the Tuesday evening service at Grove Chapel. He had for nearly thirty years a Wednesday evening lecture in the city. This was greatly blessed of God, numbers attended it, and it became an auxiliary to Grove Chapel. It was first established in Staining Lane, and after a time removed to the Welch Chapel, Jewin Crescent, Aldersgate Street. Next to his own pulpit was the Crescent, and he never would vacate it for any public service. This was kept up until within two years of his death. The writer has supplied that pulpit for him occasionally, when Mr. Irons, through illness, found it next to impossible to leave his home. His motto was, “ Never ask another to do what you are able to perform yourself ; ” and this he strictly followed out. But finding his health so fast declining, that he could scarcely take all the services of his own chapel, he was compelled, very reluctantly, to give up the Jewin Crescent lecture, which he said was to him like losing a limb. Many of his flock felt the loss also ; for either living in the city, or having to transact business there during the day, they could seldom reach the Tuesday evening lecture at the Grove in time for the service on

account of the distance. The Crescent, being near the Post-office, was very convenient to them ; and not only to his own congregation, but many attended who belonged to other Churches, especially persons from the country, some out of love, others out of curiosity ; and many who heard him regularly, at his own place, said (humanly speaking) they should never have heard him if it had not been for the Crescent. Mr. Irons used to hold an annual service and administer the Lord's supper at this place, to the members of any Church or Churches who were present, in grateful remembrance of the Lord's goodness to them, on each anniversary day of the formation of this city lecture. Some were brought to the knowledge of the truth there, who afterwards came forth to testify of what the Lord had done for their souls, and then joined the Church assembling at Grove Chapel. Thus the Lord encouraged him in this good work. The people there looked up to him as a father and friend ; they were anxiously looking forward to the Wednesday evening lecture, to obtain soul-food. Some came miles to that hallowed place ; and many testimonies were borne to the fact that God was in their midst, that power went forth with the word to the converting of sinners, and the comforting of the Lord's tried and afflicted people. This greatly encouraged him to persevere as long as he was able, feeling that he could not abandon that which God was so abundantly blessing, although it was frequently performed with great difficulty, on account of the many engagements he had to attend to, and his bodily strength declining. He often spoke of the Lord's goodness to him there, the many happy hours he had spent within the walls of Jewin Crescent, and that he fully believed that many would have cause to bless God to all eternity for having directed their feet to that place, where life divine was imparted to them under the preached word.

Some of the friends who were greatly profited under the preaching at Jewin Crescent, gave a proof of their esteem, by presenting Mr. Irons with a handsome

gown. This was accomplished so quietly, that he was not at all aware of it until it was placed in the vestry, with a note informing him it was for his use at the Wednesday lecture, which called forth the following reply :—

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am quite in the dark as to the dear Christian friends who have united with you to enrobe my poor body; I must therefore address my expression of gratitude to you, and to them through the same channel, by which the beautiful robe was conveyed to me. I suppose that you and they have learned of my blessed Master, who, when He saw me clothed in wretched old rags, kindly gave me His own perfect robe, in which I have been accustomed to go to court ever since, and can say, to the glory of His precious name, that I have never seen one of the courtiers better dressed than myself; for my best robe is the righteousness of God, which is the very same that Paul and Peter are now wearing before the throne of God. I am much gratified with, and very thankful for, the *superb silken robe* with which you have covered the outer man, for the decency and solemnity of the worship of God; but so much am I enamoured with that glorious and beautiful robe of righteousness, which cost my precious Lord His blood, that I have been talking about it these twenty years at Jewin Crescent, where many a poor sinner has been stripped, and clothed afresh by the hand of God. Still, I apprehend there are some who creep in by night, in linsey-woolsey garments, and fig-tree covering, spangled with almost every colour of modern profession, gay and smart enough in their own view; I therefore intend, God helping me, to go talking about my best robe as well as wearing it, with the humble hope that my most blessed Master will make them ashamed of their paltry patchwork—take them into His stripping-room, and then clothe them with the same robe wherewith He has clothed me. I also strongly suspect there are some at dear Jewin Crescent who have been made quite ashamed of their own old rags, and have had a sight of the best robe, but are afraid to claim it, and unable to put it on. Now for these I mean to beseech our most blessed Lord to be more kind to them than ever you were to me; for though you, like Him, provided a beautiful robe, without any work or cost of mine, yea, without my knowledge, yet you did not come and put it on me as He always does. Now as He is still the keeper of His own wardrobe, I will also pray Him to come forth at our weekly banquet, and meet such trembling souls, *who are tired of creature righteousness*, and yet too timid to appropriate the

righteousness of God as their own, and to put it on them Himself, that they may be enabled to break forth in the grateful strains of Isaiah, singing, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God, for He hath clothed me with the garment of salvation, He hath *covered me* with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." While I have been writing this, a gentleman has called at my house, wishing to join in Church fellowship with us. I was unwilling to be disturbed from my pen, but I have just given him an interview, and he informs me that it was at Jewin Crescent that the Lord delivered him from his trammels. I could not help exclaiming, "Go on, Lord! go on, Lord! give more grace, and let the Welch Chapel be always used as a robe room." Now for one word of apology before I close this scribble (and you will own that I am very awkward at apologies). I understand that I was not expected to wear my robe until next Wednesday. Allow me then to say, I did by that as I did by the white robe which my Master gave me, as soon as I got it on it felt so comfortable, and it looked so beautiful, that I said (while I turned and looked at my old rags with contempt), "I'll never put them on any more;" so I consigned them to the rag-bag from that day to this, where I should like to put all the Arminianism that is in the Church, then tie and seal up the mouth of the bag, and label it with the words, "Creature Rags," and then lay it on the pile of "wood, hay, and stubble," until the last great conflagration, to be reduced to ashes, and degrade the children of God no more. Then shall the saints shine forth in all the beauty of bridal attire, and sit down with their glorious Bridegroom at the marriage-supper, to celebrate His praise as long as eternity rolls on.

May I trouble you, my dear friend, to convey my warmest thanks to those dear friends who have been associated with you in this act of kindness, and also my Christian affection to your family; and believe me to remain gratefully,

Your faithful and affectionate pastor,

JOSEPH IRONS.

This token of love and esteem was highly prized by him. He had proof upon proof that he lived in the hearts of his people. The Lord so abundantly blessed the word through his instrumentality, that the people were ever ready to show their affection to their minister. Hundreds of souls have been comforted under the word, after being fatigued with the engagements of the day.

They have reached the Crescent, and found it to be the gate of heaven to their souls. About fourteen hundred discourses he delivered during the period the lecture was kept on, and many, very many, were the testimonies that were produced from persons residing in the country to prove the good that was accomplished there. A person, who was at that time a total stranger to Mr. Irons, residing in Warwickshire, had occasion to visit London on business. Although he was cautioned not to go near Grove Chapel, he went one Wednesday evening to Jewin Crescent, where the word was so powerfully applied to his soul, that he could not forbear informing Mr. Irons of the same, and expressed a strong desire for something of the same kind in his own neighbourhood. In the course of time he was in London again; and his love for the truth led him to hear the same highly-honoured preacher. He begged him to pay a visit to his destitute village. After it was satisfactorily ascertained that the report was perfectly correct, Mr. Irons undertook to assist them in the erection of a chapel, and told them to use all the means that were in their power in collecting for it, and he would do what he could to help in the undertaking. His counsel was taken; the funds were increasing fast, and they felt warranted in commencing the "good work." The chapel was soon erected, and put in *trust*, and all things duly arranged, when our departed friend was requested to open it for public worship in March, 1845; but, before he left for that purpose, he made a *private* collection for the cause among his own congregation. Knowing that the distance was too great for them to be present to render assistance on the occasion, and the people were anything but opulent, they kindly furnished him with £50 to carry down in cash; also purchased a communion service, and handsome pulpit Bible, for the use of the Church assembling at "Ezra Chapel, Bedworth, Warwickshire." On his return, he stated publicly at his own place, that he called upon them to join with him in praising and blessing God for His great

goodness to him during his short absence from his flock; said he had been taken out and brought home in peace and safety; adding, "I presented the little band of saints in the country that which you kindly entrusted to my care, and the overflowing gratitude of the people I shall never forget. They could not utter a word when I put the present into their hands in *your name*, and with your love and prayers for their success. At length, the oldest of the members exclaimed, 'What shall we say?' And I responded, 'Say! Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;' and they immediately sang it with all their hearts. It was truly cheering to witness their humility and gratitude. I have travelled upwards of 200 miles, preached six times, opened the chapel, re-organized the Church, ordained the minister, baptized thirteen infants, and administered the Lord's supper; and all in five days. I kept hanging on the promise, 'As thy day, so thy strength shall be.' After the second day, I felt my strength nearly exhausted; but a good man said to me, 'There is your promise, Sir—as thy day;' and I am delighted that the dear people of my charge were ready to respond to the mere hint that I gave, that such and such things were needed. The confidence they reposed in me, I trust I shall never be suffered to misuse. Surely I have again proved the faithfulness of Israel's God. Many said in the village, 'They will not collect anything worthy of notice.' One predicted it would not amount to £5. But they were mistaken."

The Coventry newspaper recorded the event, and stated that the collections at the opening amounted to £86, including £50 presented by the affectionate flock of the Rev. Joseph Irons. He took a lively interest in the cause; and, though the distance was great, he continued to visit them as long as health of body would admit of, and rendered them all the service in his power, by prayer, preaching, and purse. He was a great blessing to the people there, who were principally in circumscribed circumstances; and they, with other small

causes, will deeply feel his loss; for he was ever ready to help any poor congregation when they stood in need of assistance. One of the deacons has just stated, that it is intended to erect a tablet to the memory of Mr. Irons at Ezra Chapel; and the Church, although limited in numbers and means, are warmly exerting themselves to accomplish this laudible object, and thus perpetuate the memory of their late devoted friend and brother in that part of the country.

The compiler was requested to deliver the last lecture at Jewin Crescent, on account of the great debility of his friend. The scene will not soon be forgotten by him, as well as by many who were present on that occasion. At the close of the service he informed them that his father and friend, Mr. Irons, was compelled, through debility, to discontinue the lecture, and, therefore, it would cease from that time forward. The painful news was received with a flood of tears by more than a few, and some came into the vestry, saying, "Oh, Sir, what shall we do? Where are we to go?" All the time that Mr. Irons laboured at the Crescent, his services were gratuitous; the collections made, scarcely defrayed the expenses incurred for rent, gas, pew-openers, &c. This was known to the writer, who named it after the service (although requested not), that the lecturer was *minus* some few pounds, after twenty-eight years' weekly services; that no collection would be made, but if they felt disposed to make up the deficiency, they were at liberty to do so in any way they thought best. A few days after this simple appeal had been made, the following was presented to Mr. Irons:—

"From the Congregation accustomed to meet at the Welsh Chapel, Jewin Crescent, Aldersgate Street, City, to their well-beloved Minister of the Gospel of the Wednesday Evening Lecture. Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"In Artaxerxes' commission to Ezra, he certifies that, 'Touching any of the ministers of God, it should not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom upon them.' The circumcised in heart, commissioned by the hearts of affection to their beloved Minister, think that it is not expedient

to impose toll or tribute upon him, but desire to present to him a small token of their Christian esteem, for one who has been a faithful minister in the name of the Lord for twenty-eight years; and they are not unmindful that this, too, has been often under circumstances of great difficulty; but, as St. Paul says, in writing of the ministers of God in his day, 'We suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ;' and so they believe that this spirit has often carried him to the Welsh Chapel, when bodily ailments threatened to prevent the preaching of the blessed word of God, and that his experience has been, 'For though I preach the gospel I have nothing to glory in, for necessity is laid upon me;' and they desire to assure him, that the necessity laid upon him has resulted in many of necessity seeking Christ, according to the will of the Father, by the leading of the Holy Spirit. They pray that he may be spared for many years, if it be the will of God: and may JEHOVAH keep his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and give him grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, and, finally, may he possess

“ ‘The seat, the crown, the harp of gold,
Which wait till he arrive,
When he will Jesu's face behold,
And with Him ever live.’ ”

THE REPLY.

“To my affectionate hearers at the late Jewin Crescent Lecture, to whom I have ministered the gospel of God during twenty-eight years.

“DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN OUR COVENANT HEAD,

“Your kind *letter* and *liberal contribution*, which has cleared all the expences of that lecture for which I was liable, melted me with gratitude to God and to you, inasmuch as you have thereby proved that I have not laboured in vain among you; and it rejoices my heart to know that, though I am compelled to relinquish my weekly labours among you through debility, yet that I live in the hearts of the people of God. May He graciously lead you into green pastures beside the still waters, and feed your souls with heavenly provision, is the prayer of

Your faithful, affectionate, and grateful Minister,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, January 16, 1850.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLIES.

(A NATIONAL WARNING.)

I SAUNTERED down my garden path one day,
While noonday sun was shedding its bright ray,
And saw a little reptile working hard,
Which gave another subject to the bard.

He spun a web with most amazing skill,
Centre and circle formed at his own will;
Wheel within wheel was quickly carried round,
With order and design—but rarely found.

All his materials from himself he drew—
Beauty without, poison within, I knew;
He form'd his artful network quite complete,
And to his own dark corner made retreat.

Before the shining orb of day had set,
A heedless fly was caught in this fair net;
Down pounced the spider, seized his prey,
Tied wings and legs, and carried him away.

He dragg'd it to a corner, while I stood,
And saw him suck his hapless victim's blood;
Another fly was caught in the same net—
The spider ran another meal to get.

But lo! another spider claimed that prey,
Ran down the web, commenced a fierce affray;
And while the spiders quarrell'd for the fly,
It struggled from the net, and soar'd on high.

I paused, and learn'd this lesson from the scene:
Here's *Pocrisy* (said I,) with all its spleen,
Whose network with Satanic art is spread,
And fatal poison lurks in every thread.

Wheel within wheel, of vile intrigues to charm,
Thus men who think a cobweb can't do harm;
Though all the venom of the spider lies
Conceal'd, to pounce upon the sacrifice.

Thus dear *Old England* is, alas! decoyed,
 Until her hopes are nearly all destroyed;
Laws, offices, and property, are spun,
 To form a web in which these spiders run.

And are my countrymen like heedless flies?
 Will they embrace the net, with open eyes?
 Until these reptiles, hungry after food,
 Shall bind them hand and foot, and suck their blood?

Of superstitious cobwebs men are proud,
 And Popish vile enchantments are allowed;
 The fly is caught within the spider's snare,
 Ye dupes of artifice, beware! beware!

There's yet one hope, and only one, remains—
 The word of Scripture saith, "Jehovah reigns;"
 He overrules the tumults mortals raise,
 For Zion's welfare, and His endless praise.

The spiders are engaged in civil war;
 FRANCE, GERMANY, and ROME, despise all law;
 The Master Spider is in *exile now*,
 And the INFALLIBLE is made to bow.

Will ENGLAND do, as did the second fly—
 Burst the vile net, and learn to soar on high?
 Escape the venom of the Popish crew,
 And her long-boasted liberty renew?

Will she expel from legislative power
 The *Jesuits*, who her life-blood devour?
 Will she withhold the hard-earned public purse
 From paying men to be a public curse?

My God, arise! save my beloved land
 From Antichrist's envenom'd, ruthless hand;
 Consume the man of sin with thine own mouth,
 And send thy saving truth from north to south.

JOSEPH IRONS,
 SURNAMED "MICAIAH."

A MEMOIR OF

INSCRIBED ON A TOMB-STONE.

I KNOW I must be brought to Jesu's feet,
Or else I'm not prepar'd my Judge to meet ;
I must be clad in righteousness Divine,
Or everlasting life cannot be mine.

J. I.

FRAGMENT.

Here, far away from *Shepherd's Tent*,
Upon a gracious errand sent,
To Obed-edom's house we've come,
And hope as safely to get home.

J. I.

PERSEVERANCE.

WITH crown and kingdom kept in view,
Let us with diligence pursue
The narrow path that leads to God,
Nor faint nor loiter on the road.

Gird up your loins, my friend, and run,
The fight with sin will soon be done ;
Though doubts, and fears, and fiends withstand,
Press on to Canaan's happy land.

The pearly gates will soon appear,
Thy Jesus bid His Bride draw near ;
And while eternal day rolls on,
Be seated with Him on His throne.

J. I.

Mr. Samuel Carter, who contributed so largely to the erection of Grove Chapel, was removed to glory about eight years after he had laid the foundation-stone of that edifice. The following Hymn was composed on the occasion :—

How blest the life, how sweet the death,
Which true believers die !
They walk with God, they die in faith,
And go to dwell on high.

Enrob'd in Jesu's righteousness,
 They trust His precious blood ;
 Before the world His name confess,
 And then ascend to God.

Distinguish'd here by sov'reign grace,
 Their glory is begun—
 Admitted there, to see the face
 Of Jesus on His throne.

“To live is Christ, to die is gain,”
 For death has lost its sting ;
 They drop the body, heaven obtain,
 And endless praises sing.

They shout loud hallelujahs there
 To Him who once was slain ;
 Their sleeping dust is Jesu's care,
 He'll raise it up again.

Then when the last great trump shall sound,
 Jesus will claim His own ;
 Oh ! may my soul in Him be found,
 And bow before His throne.

J. I.

But to return to our dear friend's history. He was willing to spend his last breath in his Master's service. While health permitted, he would never flag in the work ; he went forward, fearless of all consequences. The applause or censure of men were empty things to him. I do not think that, during the whole of his ministry at Grove Chapel, except when laid aside by severe illness (which of late was of the most painful nature), that he vacated his pulpit *twelve times* on the Sabbath days, from any cause whatever. His ministry was signally owned of God in the conversion of sinners. Many hundreds have dated their new birth to his instrumentality ; and, as far as he had an opportunity of knowing this, it was recorded in the book, containing the register of the Church members. He invariably *put a star* against the names of *such*, that he might, in after days, fully recognize his spiritual children, and that he, with others, might join in praising the Lord for His

great grace bestowed on *him* and *them*. How often, in pointing to them, would he speak with a holy joy and sacred ecstasy, saying, "These are the seals to my ministry. Surely I have not laboured in vain. God has abundantly owned my poor services, and given me many spiritual children." He was daily asking God to bless his message, and always on the look-out for "sinners being plucked as brands from the burning." Tell him of multitudes being pleased and gratified with certain discourses by popular preachers, and he would pity them from his very soul; but tell him of sinners being converted to God, and saints established and fed under the word, and his very countenance would shine with pleasure. The Church was first organized with twelve members; but the Lord so blessed them, that they outran the prediction, "That a little *one* shall become a thousand, and a small *one* a strong nation; I, the Lord, will hasten it in His time" (Isa. lx. 22); for during our dear brother's stay, as the pastor of Grove Chapel, the twelve were more than multiplied by *one hundred*; for the last communion card, delivered by him at the admission of members, is numbered 1,237; and a very considerable portion of these were called by grace under his preaching. His faithfulness ensured the smiles of Israel's God, and daily he received tokens of His divine approbation. But Satan grew very angry, and stirred up many foes; but all their malice and spleen were in vain. The Lord directed, protected, and honoured him. About four hundred of his sermons are printed, and still in circulation; they have travelled over land and sea; and it afforded him a peculiar pleasure to know, that while the dear people of his charge were feeding on the finest of the wheat, that thousands who were placed in the providence of God, far away from a pure, full-weight gospel ministry, who were strangers to him after the flesh, could read the sermons in Sydney, Australia, New Zealand, Cape of Good Hope, and other distant parts. These sermons are fair specimens of his preaching; and as they were taken down regularly every Sabbath morning *for years*, they

will set forth more fully and faithfully the grand truths that were proclaimed by him for so many years past, than anything that can be penned by the writer of this brief Memoir. It can truly be said of him, "He being dead, yet speaketh." Many letters were received by him from distant parts of the world, stating the good that they had received through the reading of his sermons; and some have been called by Divine grace while perusing them. They were also used in village chapels where they had no minister. Thus his usefulness, although so very extensive in his own Church, was not confined to it. These weekly messengers trumpeted forth the gospel far and wide, to the joy and rejoicing of thousands of hungry and thirsty souls in our own and other lands. In addition to his *printed sermons*, which are so widely circulated, he was the honoured author of several works, which have passed through many editions, especially "Jazer"—some twenty-six or twenty-seven reprints. This book has been read by many thousands, and been wafted from sea to sea. I well recollect hearing a *French lady* speak of it with a degree of sacred delight, when I was in France; and she told me that she hoped, before she died, to see face to face the highly-honoured author of that book which had been made a blessing to many in her land. He also penned "Nathaniel," containing letters on Christian experience. This has also passed through several editions, and met with a favourable reception by the Church of God. Again, "Nymphas," an exposition of the Song of Solomon, in blank verse; the History of Grove Chapel; a poem, called "Calvary;" above one hundred Card Tracts, each containing an epitome of the gospel, contrasting the state of believers and unbelievers; "Zion's Hymns," containing 611 original hymns, composed for the use of Grove Chapel congregation; "Judah," a Book of Psalms, to accompany the former work. Several small tracts have been written, also the "Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans." But the list of his works are printed, and may be seen at any time, and the above valuable works perused by the reader.

While our dear friend was employed thus successfully in his study and pulpit, spreading truth in every direction as the Lord enabled him, the Church was daily increasing under his pastoral care. Numbers came forth, saying, "We will go with you; for we perceive that God is with you." It became necessary to enlarge the chapel. This was done in the year 1839, by adding two wings to receive the lobbies and gallery staircases, by which they obtained upwards of one hundred additional sittings, at a cost of £400. This was cheerfully and quickly paid for by the Church and congregation. Thus, above £5,000 has been laid out upon the building, and no debt remains, which clearly shows the love and liberality of the people: and truly it was a blessed sight to see the crowded chapel—a breathless silence, while the gospel was faithfully and affectionately proclaimed to the blassemmed throng. It is worthy of notice, that Grove Chapel, when completed, was put in trust for the use of the Church assembling there, "as an *independent cause*;" and the choice of a future *pastor*, or *fresh trustee*, is vested entirely in the hands of the members of the Church—a majority of which is binding—thus securing the same doctrine and discipline; and no person can officiate in either capacity but those chosen by the Church, subject to the trust deed. Mr. Irons was not only very particular as to the doctrine proclaimed within the walls of Grove Chapel, but quite as particular as to the discipline of the Church. The articles which have been noticed in another part of this work were closely attended to; and he said, until the time of his departure, that, under God, they were indebted to their scriptural discipline, for all the peace and prosperity they so largely shared in; nor would he sanction the least deviation from the Church articles, on any account, during the long period he was the pastor. Surely few ministers (if any) were more successful in winning souls to Christ than he was. The powerful appeals to conscience that were so frequently made, contrasting the saint and sinner, both here and hereafter—the uncertainty of life,

and the certainty of death—the importance and nature of regeneration—and the satisfactory evidence of the new birth, were subjects constantly dwelt upon; and God the Holy Spirit applied them with power to the souls of many, producing the cry of “Lord, save, or I perish!” And his preaching was greatly owned of God, in the building-up of His saints in their most holy faith. He was ever on the look-out for a growth in grace, making advancement in the Divine life, maintaining our high distinction from the world, and, by a holy life, “putting to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

In the year 1836, the Church at Grove Chapel gave a splendid specimen of their love and liberality to their devoted pastor, on his attaining his fifty-first birthday, by presenting him with an ELEGANT COMMUNION SERVICE, of massive silver, comprising a flagon, salver, and cups. The whole was subscribed for by the members as *privately* as possible, and each had an opportunity of expressing their love to their pastor. The ladies raised the fund for the cups, and the gentlemen the sum required for the flagon and salver. Each piece is beautifully engraved, *bearing his name as the gift of the Church to him*, with a suitable portion of Scripture. When the whole was completed, the princely present was forwarded to him by a few members of the Church, with an appropriate address *from the whole*, begging his acceptance as a token of their love and affection to him, with unfeigned gratitude to their covenant God for sparing him so long, and making him so useful in their midst.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPLY.

“*Shepherd's Tent*, Nov. 5, 1836.

“MY DEAR FRIEND,

“As you have been this morning the organ of communication for yourself and your dear sisters in the Lord, presenting your and their kind Christian congratulations, with the *elegant* and *valuable* present which I have received, will you do me the favour of accepting, and presenting to them, my warmest expressions of gratitude for such proofs of supernatural

attachment, and generous kindness? No other form in which a gift could have been presented, would have been half so grateful to my feelings; because I shall *now* always have before me, at the Lord's table, the evidence of that love which we there commemorate, having inflamed your hearts. Any piece of plate upon *my own table* might have been gratifying to nature, and often reminded me of your warm friendship; but *this* will remind me of what grace has done for your precious souls, and, I trust, often call forth an earnest prayer that you, and all the dear people of my charge, may be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. It has, indeed, often been afflictive to my mind to use *silver at my own table*, and pewter at my Lord's. * * * * It rejoices me exceedingly that the Lord has put it into the hearts of those dear ladies thus to honour His precious name, and to gratify His willing, though feeble servant. Most heartily do I join in your prayer, that our covenant God may "*cement our union more firmly than ever*," and that the triumphs of grace among us may be yet more and more signal. Mrs. Irons begs me to present her kindest Christian love to you, and to those dear friends whom you thus represent. * * * * Believe me to remain, with heartfelt affection and gratitude,

Your ever faithful Pastor,

J. IRONS.

A letter was also promptly forwarded to the dear brethren, who had so cheerfully united in this labour of love, couched in the most affectionate terms, expressive of his love to them, thanking God for the prosperity so conspicuous in their midst as a Church, and praying the Lord that it might continue, and even increase, to the glorifying of Jehovah's holy name, if in accordance with His Divine will. It may be safely asserted, that this act of Christian generosity was never forgotten by him. No service did he delight in to the same extent, as that of the Lord's Supper; and, while reflecting on the love of a precious Christ to His people, and holding the sacred vessels, in the administration of the ordinance, his affection was warmly called forth to that portion of his disciples who had been so liberal to him.

Having glanced at him as a minister of the gospel, and attempted to draw an outline of his portrait (and beyond that we cannot proceed), let us for a moment look at him as a *man*; and in so doing, surely we shall,

one and all, exclaim that he was *free, firm, and faithful*, sincere and devoted. He loved peace, and daily sought to obtain and promote it, and would say, "Blessed are the peace-makers;" yet he never desired to obtain it unlawfully. *Peace at the expense of justice would not do for Joseph Irons.* He would not listen to the childish cry of, "Anything for peace." He could not—he would not, sacrifice principle for the sake of obtaining it, however dear it was to him, being so closely connected with real prosperity. He prayed to be kept from *false peace* and *false friends*. I question if you could find a man more honest, upright, and straightforward, in all his proceedings; they would not admit of a second opinion. A man of great natural talent, discernment, and discretion—open, candid, prompt, and penetrating; this he carried in his very countenance. His word was his bond; he could not tolerate anything like duplicity or double-dealing; a total stranger to fickleness. He was active, energetic, and lively; possessing a great amount of real ingenuity, proving, even to those who were prejudiced, that he was a clever man in the strictest sense of the word. He was also very cheerful. You could not be in his company for half-an-hour without obtaining something that would please, and be worth retaining. Although naturally cheerful, see him when you would (except in great pain of body), yet there was nothing fulsome or frothy; for he was an enemy to levity, either in the pulpit or parlour. His words were weighty, and full of meaning. If anything gave offence, it was his plain way of stating facts, and answering questions. You could not, by any means, fail in understanding his mind in temporal or spiritual matters. Quick in thought, word, and work, diligently employing all the talent he possessed (which was anything but limited), to the good of his fellow-men, and to the glorifying of his God; laying himself out for the real welfare of the cause in which he was employed. He used often to say, "I like a man that means what he says; so that it is impossible to misunderstand him. I do not

like ambiguity in any sense of the word." And certainly he was a prudent man, careful in all his transactions. As to his activity, few would equal him; idleness he thought to be a shocking vice. He could not bear to be in company with any one of lazy habits. He said there were no idle angels; they were all ministering servants, sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation. There were no idle devils; they were going to and fro, to do all the mischief in their power; that earth was the only place where it could be found; that it was disgraceful in any one, especially in a child of God; and this he carried out to the very letter in his life. Meet him when you would, he would be engaged either with his head, his hands, his feet, or his tongue. He was really a persevering man; he would never sit down, saying this or that cannot be accomplished, until he had carefully and prayerfully attempted it; and would never abandon it, unless he proved it to be hopeless. He was also an orderly man in his dress, person, house, family, and closet; in a word, *in all he had to do with*, he would have a place for everything, if possible, and *everything must be in its place*. To him it was not irksome, but just the contrary; he knew where to find anything at a moment's notice. He was an abstemious man, regular in all his habits, punctual in all he performed. Military time observed for private meals, and public ministrations; you would never find him five minutes too late. A more systematic man is to be rarely found. He often said that he was a thorough-paced *Methodist*; order was indispensable. He would carefully and quickly mark down his plans, and then rigidly act up to them. He was a total stranger to fickleness, and could not act with men given to change, unless necessity demanded it. He greatly admired cleanliness. To him, it was next to godliness; and he has frequently said, he thought there could not be much of the latter, where there was the absence of the former. You could not discover a spot on his dress, meet him at home or abroad, although

no man ever studied dress less than he did; but cleanliness and neatness were indispensable. However plain his food, it must be served up with cleanliness and punctuality. He never followed the fashion of the day in diet, dress, or divinity; but said that he was truly an old-fashioned man, not given to change. As a husband, he was the most devoted. He would not travel anywhere without his wife (if it were possible for her to accompany him), calling her "his rib." He had been married twice. To the first Mrs. Irons he was warmly attached; she was the mother of all his children. He married young, and they lived happily together for twenty-four years. She shared largely in the anxieties that attended his early life, in bringing up a large family, together with the responsibility of "taking care of the Church of God." She departed this life in the year 1828. This was a heavy loss to him. Both as a parent and a public character, she studied his peace to a wonderful extent, and used every means in her power to keep from him any information, either by letter or otherwise, that would distress his mind or add to his trials; thus acting her part in the most faithful and affectionate way during the many years they were united. She was buried under the pulpit at Grove Chapel, and the Rev. Robert Stodhart, who had been her spiritual father and friend, was requested to attend her funeral—also to preach her funeral sermon, which he kindly consented to do; and the chapel was densely filled on the occasion, to witness the solemn ceremony, and to listen to the impressive truths delivered. The Lord wonderfully sustained him under his deep affliction and bereavement, and gave him grace to say, "Thy will be done."

The present Mrs. Irons was united to him in July, 1829, and for more than twenty-two years they lived together in the most affectionate way. She was to him a true "help meet." A more suitable person could not have been chosen by him. In all his joys she participated to the full; nor did she shrink from his cup of sorrow. He had much to try him, many enemies to

distress him, and much to cast him down, in the prosecuting of his sacred labours; but, amidst it all, it is only due to state, she was always the same kind, faithful friend. She watched, with the eye of affection, the every look and every motion of her dear husband; and, if prudence did not forbid, the compiler could say much on this head, but forbears; therefore proceeds, only adding, never were there any united, that were more ardently attached to each other, or more equally yoked together, than they were. Mr. Irons often remarked, that few men were blest with *two such wives* as he had been; that he believed "matches" were made in heaven (certainly his was, and that he had full proof of); that he could not sufficiently bless God for His goodness to him in this respect, for "a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Prov. xix. 14). As a father he was firm, but his firmness was blended with fondness. This is fully borne out by the testimony of one of his sons, to which I once listened. He spoke in the highest terms of his dear father, and this confirmed the good opinion I had before formed concerning him as a parent. And as a master, those who knew him best in this character have borne the most honourable testimony to his kindness. Having followed our dear departed friend thus far, we shall next bring before your notice a few more letters, which were selected out of many; but it would lead us beyond the limits of this memoir to do more than publish a few of them as we proceed.

Mr. Irons, on each returning natal day, and the anniversary of his wedding-day, was accustomed to present Mrs. Irons with some token of his affection, and writing some short, but suitable address with each. The following is selected:—

"A BIRTHDAY PRESENT for my wife,
Who is the comfort of my life.
Her life may God in mercy spare
Through all my journey, is my pray'r.
All needful grace may He bestow,
While He detains us here below ;

And when we leave this desert land,
Give us a place at His right hand.

Her loving husband,

JOSEPH IRONS."

Dec. 5, 1846.

ACROSTIC.

W ITH wonder I survey the plan
I n heaven contrived to rescue man ;
L ove was its basis—love its chart—
L ove mov'd each spring, and form'd each part.
I ncarnate love the scheme display'd
A sure foundation for us laid,
M ade man rejoice, and fiends afraid.

I nfluence Divine this love imparts,
R enews and sanctifies our hearts ;
O pens its stores with rich supplies ;
N ew cov'nant blessings oft applies,
S eals us to joys above the skies.

Lewes, Sept. 23, 1823.

MRS. IRONS,

Truly goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life ; and if I were to write my history, it would be one long *record of covenant love and mercy*, heaping up favours, day by day, upon a poor insignificant worm. How very delightful is the thought to my mind, that the same kind hand is at this moment protecting and preserving *me*, and those also, who are inseparably parts of myself, at *Jazer Cottage*, although fifty miles now separate us, as to bodily presence. I preached to a crowded congregation on Monday night, but do not expect to preach again till Sabbath-day, by which time I shall be pining for the pulpit. Oh, how delightful is my Lord's work ! I would not change my employ for all the thrones and sceptres in the universe ; and blessed be the name of my beloved Master, He will never discharge me (bad as I am) from His service ; but will, I trust, strengthen me for His work in this journey, and then, in *His name*, I vow vengeance against His enemies on my return. You would be amused to see the *various* methods I adopt in sowing the seed as I go.

* * * *

Guildford, April 9, 1824.

MRS. IRONS,

* * * * How animating is the prospect of seeing the whole Church, which Jesus purchased with His own blood, brought home

to glory with their exalted covenant Head! And oh, how delightful the *hope*, the *assurance*, of being numbered with them, and sharing in their everlasting glories! Let us, my dear, "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Verily, all that the world presents is but a bubble, which bursts as we grasp it; but in Jesus substantial good is found, which will bear the strictest scrutiny, and outlive the vicissitudes of time. You and I are really very rich; for we have in a precious Christ *all*—more than we can spend to all eternity; nor can sin, earth, or hell, rob us of our grand portion. It is the gift of our covenant God and Father. It is the bequest of our covenant Head and Husband. It is witnessed and communicated by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Omnipotence guards it, immutable faithfulness preserves it, and everlasting glory shall unfold it, for our perpetual enjoyment. Oh, how little, how mean is everything beside! And how infinitely important that our minds should be disengaged from everything that tends to clog the holy aspirations of our minds. * * * *

Camberwell, Aug. 3, 1841.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In reply to your letter, I would say, the Lord has laid upon my mind a desire to comply with your request; but the earliest time I can leave home is for the 18th and 19th of August. If that will suit your convenience, I will preach at your place on the 18th, and wherever you may obtain a pulpit on the 19th. We had a very blessed season last Lord's-day, and Jesus was manifestly present at His table, making Himself known in the breaking of bread. Indeed, my dear friend, the whole secret of our religion lies in communion with the persons and perfections of Deity, in public or in private; and this is the invaluable privilege of all the election of grace, which distinguishes them from the world that lieth in wickedness, so that whatever streams and vessels may be withheld, "All our springs are in *Him*." Our subject at Grove Chapel on Lord's-day morning was from that precious promise, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth;" and I trust that His dear name was as ointment poured forth, while we spake of Him as the true God and eternal life (1 John v. 20)—the Head of His Church (Col. i. 18)—the imperial Sovereign (Ps. ii. 6)—and the Saviour of His people (Matt. i. 21). Then we attended to the decree, that all worlds should bow to Him. The blessed in heaven bow, adore, love, and praise Him perpetually; and ransomed souls on earth bow to His sceptre when He conquers them by His grace; and the happiness of their after-life arises from, and is maintained by, habitual prostration be-

fore Him—making every point of experience, and every circumstance in providence, bow to His sovereign will, and honour His dear name. Oh, what a comfort it is to know that every *enemy* shall bow before Him, whether in the earth or under the earth, so that we have nothing to fear from earth or hell! Believe me to remain,

Yours in Jesus,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, Sept. 1, 1842.

DEAR SISTER IN THE LORD,

In reply to your kind note, I can only say, that I am never so happy as when engaged in my Lord's work. You may, therefore, announce my preaching at Hayes, both Tuesday and Wednesday evenings (D.V). *I never wish to leave home without the warrant which God gave to Jeremiah, "Thou shalt go to all that I send thee; and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak" (Jer. i. 7).* Oh, my friend, we have no time to lose in the glorifying of Him, who thought not His *life* and His *blood* too much to give for us! And I know of nothing which makes me more ashamed, than the review of past days and years of neglect, and half-heartedness in His cause, since I have known His precious name. I anticipate my journey is of the Lord, because He has marked out something to do for Him every evening; and who can tell what may be in store for some precious souls in your neighbourhood? One thing we are *sure* of—viz., that all whom the Father hath given to Christ shall come to Him, whatever obstacles may oppose them. We are, therefore, encouraged to pray—yea, encouraged to believe, that "His word shall not return to Him void;" and who knows but He who made the dew to fill Gideon's fleece intends to water your soul, and the souls of those dear to you, in that sweet retired spot? Then we shall each have cause to sing, "This is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes."

Yours in our glorious Christ,

J. IRONS.

(EXTRACT.)

June 1, 1847.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * * The Lord may be dealing with you according to His old-fashioned plan; for you will remember reading, that He brought Israel out of Egypt "the self-same day" that the 430 years expired. But even *that day* was permitted to run out first; and it was in the night of the *last day* of the date. How their faith must have been tried when they saw "the self-same day" run out, and no deliverance! But observe,

it *did* come, and that, too, before the *next day* dawned; and so will yours, only be sure that your *door-posts* are *kept sprinkled* with the blood of the Lamb, and wait the Lord's time. Perhaps He may send you out at last, as He did them, without giving you time to bake the dough in your kneading trough. *In haste.*

I remain, yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, June 13, 1843.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your kind note should have had an earlier reply, but for the number of my engagements, and the weight of my trials, of which, however, I would not complain; for I have, through Divine teaching, discovered that the glorious Master of the house has placed my trials as his *porter*, or door-keeper, with express orders to open the door to *His mercies*, *His provision bearers*, and *His medicine carriers*; and to shut it against *carnality*, *fleshly ease*, and *self-confidence*, with all their *obtrusive family*. Now if the door-keeper does his office well, admitting all that my Lord sends, and shutting out all that my Lord hates, I may well put up with the *sour looks* and rough manners of the porter, especially when he opens to my Master Himself, so that He comes in, "and sups with me, and I with Him," upon all the dainties of the covenant of grace. But, oh! I have often been so displeased with the porter, as to be unmindful of the sound of his Master's feet behind him, and so offended have I been with the sharpness of his manners, and his uncourteous roughness, as to wish him *discharged*. Well, blessed be the Lord, He never consulted my caprice in these matters; and if, at any time, He seems to comply with my wish, and removes one door-keeper, He not unfrequently sends a stronger and more frowning one in his stead. But the mercy is, that they are *all* under the Master's authority, and obliged to obey His orders for my welfare, though not at my bidding. What a mercy, my dear friend, to belong to the household, "to dwell in God, and God to dwell in us." One thing of importance I would always bear in mind, that the nearer I get to the inner chamber, with the blessed Master, the further I am off from the noise and frown of the porter.

Many thanks, dear friend, for your kind invitation; but at present the porter is in such violent fits at the door, that I cannot fix the time; but I believe the Master has fixed it, and when He lets me know, I will forward the information to you.

Yours in Him,

J. IRONS.

Sept. 9, 1844.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * * * Your letter has deeply interested me; and as you ask my advice, which I at first hesitated to give, until I laid it before the throne. * * * * * Only cleave unto the Lord, and confide in Him; for it is said, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed;" and He whose precious blood was shed for your ransom will not allow any of your lesser affairs to go unnoticed, or unmanaged by His infinite wisdom, or almighty power. Clouds and darkness may be round about Him, but righteousness and judgment are the habitations of His throne. If at any time we forget that it is a *wilderness* through which we are passing, the result is, a disposition to make a *nest*, and snug ourselves in it; but when the Lord stirs it up, according to promise, He enables faith to stretch her wings, and soar to that blessed inheritance which lies out of the reach of sin and sorrow.

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, Dec. 17, 1844.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am ashamed that your interesting note should remain so long unanswered. I am deeply concerned for your *best* prosperity. You are, indeed, called to live by faith; and it is a great mercy that our glorious High Priest and Intercessor is always praying for you, that your faith fail not. Yea, He is Himself the Author and the Finisher of your faith, so that it cannot fail until *He fails*. I know, by painful experience, that *feelings* often strive to get the upper hand of *faith*, and then it is a distressing time with us; but still, the "I have prayed for thee," is cheering. It is a duty and a privilege for Christians to pray for one another; and, oh, how blessed the thought, that though they may forget each other for awhile, Jesus, our Advocate, says, "Yet will I not forget thee!" Rejoice, therefore, that there is not a moment in which thy glorious Lord is not advocating thy cause above! What can go wrong while Jesus intercedes for *all*, manages *all*, and ensures *all*, that pertains to our welfare? *I was much pleased to hear that you were engaged in visiting the sick and dying. The more you pursue that plan, the more your own soul will prosper.* I enclose you a sermon, which one of my occasional hearers calls, "a *conscience-scraping* sermon."

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, Feb. 4, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I find you are still the subject of wilderness-cares, but not left without sufficient supplies for every day's trial. No! nor ever can be; because our God is faithful. The whole journey of Israel was in a wilderness, amidst many dangers, enemies, and privations; but their Guide never forsook them, nor did the *manna* fail to the end of their journey, though their heart sometimes fretted against the Lord, and murmured at the want of water, and again at the bitterness of the water. Nevertheless, "He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night." Nor have you and I ever lacked the gracious guidance and constant support of our covenant God in our wilderness-journey. There is much instruction to be gained from tracing the route of the tribes of Israel from Egypt to Canaan; and if you look at the map, you will see that ELIM is not far from MARAH; so that when we are brought to the place where there is no water, or only *bitter* water, we should anticipate our *next* encampment, where there are twelve wells, and threescore-and-ten palm-trees, abundant supplies, and extensive shade. But we are not out of this great wilderness yet, and one journey lies by *Meribah*—"contention and dispute!" Ah! I like ELIM better than MERIBAH. But *go forward* I must; for the pillar of cloud goes on. HOREB, the mount of God, is just before, and there I hope to enjoy as close communion with God, as Moses did; and peradventure the very contentions of Meribah may enhance my fellowship with Him. Yea, from Mount Horeb we may review, with composure, the terrors of Sinai, and all that is appalling in the wilderness, especially when we see that our next encampment will be at PARAN, which signifies "*beauty and glory!*" the very things which we have in Jesus and His precious gospel, whither the pillar of cloud leads us from Sinai. Fain would I stay long in PARAN, to admire and appropriate the "*beauty and glory*" of Israel's King, and hear Him say to me, "Thou art comely, through my comeliness which I have put upon thee." But O! the wilderness of EDOM yet lies in my way, the very name of which ("*earthly*") makes my spirit to sink; because *earthly* things are so opposed to my heaven-bound progress. But even *here* I see a KADISH BARNEA, even for inconstant and froward sons in their glorious Elder Brother. Let the thoughts of Canaan cheer thee, my dear friend, even when the leadings of our God may bring you to cross your own paths, as Israel did frequently. We shall soon cross over Jordan, and enter the land which flows with milk and honey; nor can even our multiplied provocations alter the covenant and oath of our God. I am now encamping at ARNON, rejoicing beside the ark; this is in the borders of

MOAB, not far from GILGAL (the revolving wheel), from whence I am expecting to cross over JORDAN. The Lord is still among us at the Grove; the shout of a King is heard in our camp; Satan is angry with me, and my way in providence rather rough; but my shoes are iron and brass.

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, April 19, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I find you are still in the beaten path of "much tribulation;" and I am walking side by side with you. Our exercises may, indeed, be very diverse, but they are just the very *sort* and *size* which infinite wisdom and paternal love appointed for us; and when we are brought through all the *ins* and *outs*, *ups* and *downs* of our wilderness route, we shall see and *own*, that not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord our God hath spoken concerning us. Yea, more; we shall then be satisfied that some of the roughest things in our journey were among the *best* of our Father's dealings with us. Do not be dismayed, dear friend, that nature yet shrinks from the touch of the last kind messenger. "That which is born after the flesh is flesh, and that which is born after the Spirit is Spirit." And I often find, that while the heaven-born principle aspires and pants to range the plains of bliss, old Adam nature cleaves to the *dust*, and says, "Let me stay a little longer in my native land." But I anticipate, that when the hour arrives for my departure, nature will be made to acquiesce in the wish of grace. It is quickening grace we want, to call into exercise the graces bestowed; therefore the Psalmist's prayer suits us well, "Quicken thou me!" We have all we want *in Jesus* for eternal salvation; but we want larger communications *from Him*, and stronger confidence *in Him*, which can only be obtained by closer intimacy with Him. May He pour upon us the spirit of prayer for that purpose. Well, be this our comfort—He ever lives to intercede for us; and though we may be clouded in our experience, dark in our closet, and barren in life, yet He is always the *Sun*, always light, always exclaiming, "In me is thy fruit found." He has never been a "barren wilderness" to us, nor *will* He, nor *can* He, "withhold any good thing from us." All heaven and earth are at His command for the *real* interests of His people.

Yours, in the bonds of the gospel,

J. IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, July 16, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I hope you will excuse my visiting you this season. I feel so pressed in spirit to bring out my Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans,

that I am very unwilling to lose a day in forwarding it. My day of *strength* for labour in my Master's *vineyard* is *fast drawing* to a close. But what a mercy that there is an eternal day before us, and "no night there." Oh! for grace to live in the constant anticipation of being like Christ, and seeing Him as He is. Even *here* the light of His countenance is bliss, though we only see Him "through a glass darkly." What, then, must be the full fruition of His presence in unclouded glory? The thought seems to make the world, and all that is in it, sink into contempt; and sure I am, that our happiest moments on earth are those which afford us the closest intimacy with Jesus; for *then* the tempter is dismayed, the *world* is trampled under foot, and *self* is crucified, that Christ may be crowned in our experience, and become our all and in all to our souls. There is one thing that grieves me much—the disposition which I feel in my poor nature to fret and grumble about the few little mole-hills which lie in my path, although they are the positive proof of my being in the right path; for the *Map* says, "through much tribulation;" and faith says, it is the *best* way; and the promise says, "The righteous shall hold on his way." We have good shoes (Deut. xxxiii. 25), a good Guide (Ps. xxxii. 8), and a *good* home (Ps. lxxiii. 24). Let us, then, "gird up our loins," and press toward the mark for the prize. May the Holy Ghost inspire our hearts with courage and zeal to say to everything around us, "Hinder me not." Glory is in view; and having had the foretaste of it at Jesu's feet, we must pursue the road, to reach its consummation.

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

EXTRACT. TO THE SAME.

"Our happiness depends not on creatures nor on created good, but upon our union with Christ, producing that communion which lifts the soul above terrene things, and fixes the confidence in Divine faithfulness.

"A life of *faith* is much to be preferred to a life of sensible enjoyment; for the former is solid food, while the latter is only sweetmeats. The former brings great glory to God, while the latter affords gratification to us. Sometimes, however, the Lord favours us with *both*, and then it is a complete feast. Faith takes God at His word, claims all the promises, triumphs over sin, and expects eternal glory."

Camberwell, January 16, 1846.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I know you will rejoice with me to learn that we closed the old year and opened the *new* with renewed tokens of Divine favour. In Grove

Chapel peace and love reign among us, and the Lord added twelve additional members for the first Lord's Day. My own soul was never more overpowered with the word than last Sabbath morning, from Prov. viii. 22. The glorious truth, that Jehovah possessed the covenant Head, and His covenant bond, from everlasting, and that my life was then hid with Christ in God, and therefore possessed of God also; it so filled my soul with delight, that all my powers were called forth to try to express it, and the whole house appeared to be filled with His glory. What must the consummation of such blessedness be? I rejoice to learn from your last, that you are no stranger to the sweet and cheering manifestations of Divine love to your soul. May they be more frequent and copious, if the Lord will; but if, like the disciples on the mount, a cloud should overshadow you, do not fear as you enter the cloud, for Jesus is there also; for He is immutable, and has all clouds—yea, and all storms—under His control. * * * *

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, April 24, 1846.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have been in Warwickshire during Easter week, and preaching almost every day. I have not had any time to call my own; indeed, I do not wish to call any time my own, for I am not my own; therefore desire my time and my powers to be devoted to *Him* who redeemed me with His precious blood, and who says, "Son, go work in my vineyard to-day."

On my return home, another application waited for me from the extremity of Hertfordshire, which seems imperiously to summon me to their aid. *Well, I hope to die in harness*; and where my blessed Master sends me, I must go; and if He will mark out anything for me to do at *Hayes*, or its vicinity, I will readily visit it again during the summer.

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, January 5, 1850.

DEAR NEPHEW,

Your sable-margined note came to hand this morning, and I hasten to express my sympathy with you in your bereavement. May the Lord sanctify it, and support you under it, bringing you to live nearer to Himself, while creature comforts recede from you, and expire in their very grasp.

It would afford me gratification to meet you at *Ware*, if it had been

possible; but such are my deep afflictions, that I could not take such a journey. The gout has not only disabled me from walking, but it has seized my stomach, and destroyed digestion, which prostrates the body, and tells me that my journey is nearly ended. Blessed be God, that is no bad news, because I have a good home to go to.

Give my love to my dear relatives, and say, *I should like to visit the spot where my beloved parents are interred, but cannot.*

Forgive this hasty scrawl, for I can scarcely hold my pen.

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, November 7, 1835.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

Having been favoured this morning with most gracious and prompt assistance from above, in preparing food for the beloved people of my charge to-morrow, I seize a few moments to thank you for your affectionate remembrance of my *natal day*, and the very kind note I then received. Indeed, I know no man who is so great a debtor to the overwhelming goodness of our Triune God as myself, especially on account of the extensive use He has condescended to make of my poor labours among His beloved and redeemed people.

Since my return from the *Banks of Jordan*, my dear Lord has very manifestly put great power into the proclamation of His truth; and while I am abased and astonished before Him, wondering at the wisdom and power which makes use of the weakest instruments for the furtherance of Divine purposes, I cannot but cherish the confident expectation that we shall see greater things than these.

It is very delightful to me to live in the hearts of so many of God's saints. But oh! the bliss of living *sensibly* in the heart of God Himself, as it is written, "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him." This is heaven on earth. May the holy, blessed, and glorious Three-in-One grant us more extensive enjoyment of it, until it is consummated in His immediate and unveiled presence. Having much that demands my attention this evening, I fear that I shall not be able to see you, but hope to meet you in "Bethel" to-morrow, and pray that we may all enjoy the presence of Jacob's God there.

I am, my dear Friend,

Your affectionate and devoted Pastor and Friend,

J. IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, November 6, 1834.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As the plants in our gardens deepen their roots and strengthen their stems by every year's growth, so long-standing friendship, and especially Christian love, are consolidated by time; and every year, as it rolls away, seems to render the tie more firm. What, then, is that friendship and love which has been set upon you and I from eternity, and which has borne with all our provocations, with unabated ardour to the present hour—yea, which must be for ever immutable? Oh! may its special manifestations be every year, and every day, more full and strong in our precious souls.

Accept my thanks, dear friend, for your kind remembrance of my *natal day*, and join with me in loudest ascriptions of praise to Him who has kept us, and made us what we are, by grace. My dear wife unites with me in gratitude and love to you and your dear husband. And I remain, in bonds of covenant relation, in union with our glorious covenant Head,

Your faithful and affectionate Friend and Pastor,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, November 7, 1838.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am quite ashamed that your kind congratulations and beautiful present have not been acknowledged sooner. * * * * Had I the fruitful imagination and the ready pen of a Hervey, you have, my dear friend, furnished me with ample subjects to employ both; but as that is not the case, perhaps you will not expect more from me than a simple but heartfelt prayer, that the Rose of Sharon may diffuse His heavenly fragrance to your spiritual senses, in your closet, in your family, and the sacred ordinances of the Lord's house, that all the beauty, purity, and excellence of both lilies may adorn your experience—that the solemn vow of Him who says, "Though a mother forget her offspring (which you feel to be impossible), yet will I not forget thee;" and lest you should forget *Him*, He has graciously engaged that His Holy Spirit shall be your remembrancer; so that He is a *double* "Forget-me-not." May you, moreover, have always before your eyes more of the beauty, glory, and joy of Him (whose passion did everything for your salvation and redemption), than the most lively and fruitful imagination could pourtray from the passion-flower; and may it be always in your bosom, so that every week may be "passion week" to you. And as to that graceful and beautiful flower, the Fuschia, whose name, I understand, signifies "*to pour forth*," may it ever point you to Him whose purple robe was dyed in His own crimson flood, when He poured forth His soul

unto death for you ; and may He pour forth all the graces of His Spirit richly upon you, and make you a spiritual Fuschia, always in full-bloom, pouring forth your soul unto Him. This will water the "Forget-me-not," which two alone will well adorn the bosom of faith. Many thanks for the assurance that you do not forget me before the throne. Sensible of all your kindness,

Believe me to remain, your faithful and affectionate Pastor,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, November 6, 1850.

Many thanks, my dear friend, for your birthday present, and for your interesting note. Truly I am overwhelmed with the goodness of God to me, and the affection of my endeared flock. Yesterday will be a memorable day to me; my strength and vigour were miraculous; and dear Grove Chapel was more densely crowded than ever I saw it before, *except on one solemn occasion.**

I believe the Lord was manifestly there. It quite rejoices my heart to hear of the many public demonstrations of Protestant feeling. I hope and pray that they may not be allowed to evaporate or die away; but that it will appear manifest that our God is about to answer the very many prayers which have been offered up in Grove Chapel and elsewhere for the deliverance of His living Church from the fangs of Antichrist. Let us not cease to cry unto Him day and night, until "enlargement and deliverance come." And then He shall never hear the last of it "in praises and thanksgivings;" for when Babylon shall be thrown down, we will unanimously join in the song, written for that occasion by God Himself, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven (the Church), and ye holy apostles and prophets."

With kindest Christian love, in which Mrs. Irons unites, to you and to your dear husband, and to your kind daughter,

I remain, your faithful and affectionate Pastor and Friend,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, November 7, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I feel it to be no small mercy to be kept, by the power of God, immovably firm in the truth, in these days of degeneracy and time-serving, both among preachers and hearers. I trust that our covenant God will still supply sufficient grace to both the pastor and the people of dear GROVE CHAPEL, to distinguish us more and more from the professing multitude around, who have the form of godliness, but who deny the

* The funeral of Mrs. Irons.

power thereof, both in creed and conduct. * * * * While I have my pen in hand, allow me to caution you against three notorious thieves, who have, I fear, committed depredations upon your comfort; their names are UNBELIEF, UNCERTAINTY, and UNDERRATER. The first disputes your birthright, the second fills you with perplexity, and the third calls in question what God has done for you. The Lord increase your assurance, witness your affinity, and assist your appropriation, prays your faithful and affectionate Pastor,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Camberwell, March 7, 1850.

MY DEAR BOY,

As you so frankly acknowledge in your note to me, "that all your calamities might have been avoided, had you attended to a kind father's counsel," I feel encouraged to write a few words of counsel for your use in the *New World*. And, first, as soon as you read this, get alone somewhere to read a portion of Scripture; put yourself upon your knees, and ask God to teach you how to pray, and to direct all your future steps. Then proceed to the persons to whom you have letters of introduction, and seek to get employment as soon as possible; and when you have succeeded (which I pray God may be soon), let the Psalmist's prayer be often repeated by you, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait upon thee." Never, on any account, forfeit your word; but strive to obtain and maintain the entire confidence of those who employ you. Make but few acquaintances, and let them be exclusively men of reputation. And prove this before you associate with them; for if you once stoop to mingle and mix with persons of lower standing than your own, you will never rise again. Determine to be a gentleman; and may God Almighty make you a Christian. With the hope of this (for which *I am daily praying*), let me further advise you to avoid Sabbath-breaking. Early inquire for some place of worship, where the same doctrines are preached which you have often heard in Grove Chapel, and meditate upon what you hear. Now, may God, "whose I am, and whom I serve," preserve you from all evil, and give you life Divine; that, if I never see you again in this world, I may meet you at His right hand in the realms of bliss. Mrs. I. unites with me in *love* to you; and I remain,

Your affectionate Father,

JOSEPH IRONS.

The foregoing letter would not have been brought before the eye of the public, but for the unkind remarks

that have been made by some concerning our dear departed friend, respecting *his conduct to his children*. Many might be produced; but surely this is sufficient to satisfy the minds of any who might have indulged in any unfavourable opinion concerning him. Satan stirred up many foes, but surely none so vile as those who would enter the family circle, and plunge the dagger of slander into the heart of a kind and affectionate parent, and one who was a public character, to try to rob him of comfort, and prevent his usefulness, by their unnatural and unfounded remarks. Those of his friends who were favoured by occasionally bowing the knee, and joining with him at the family altar, can bear ample testimony to the fact, *how he constantly wrestled with God for his children*, that God would bless them with His grace, that they might live before the Lord; and, if he was not allowed to see it, that after he was gathered to his fathers, that they might rise up as a seed to serve Him. And how often would the tear of affection start from his eyes, while pleading for them, or speaking of them! They lived in his heart; he dearly loved them, and was constantly seeking their welfare. Grace he could not communicate; but he gave them a liberal education, to fit them for life; and all the godly counsel a fond father could give his children, was daily imparted to them. During his life, the Lord was pleased to call some of them by His grace; and this greatly encouraged him still to pray for the conversion of the remainder, which he continued to do until the close of his earthly pilgrimage; for no man ever loved his children more dearly than Joseph Irons. Two were removed to glory—one many years since; the other of more recent date, leaving a widow and babe behind; but the Lord saw fit to take them also, a very short time after the death of his son.

Shepherd's Tent, Sept. 13, 1843.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad that you have met with one who delivers all the counsel of God *without reserve and without addition*. What a mercy that God has

given you spiritual discernment in the truth, and a keen appetite for it. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Blessed indeed! for it sustains and nourishes the life of God in the soul, and affords a blessed earnest and foretaste of the joys of heaven. Yea, even the privation of the feasting upon the truth sometimes sharpens the appetite of the soul, as fasting in nature does the body; and I hope that the Lord will bring you home with recruited health of body, and with a sharp appetite to come to the feast of fat things, which our covenant God has provided in our holy and beautiful house. Yet a little while, and we shall sit down with our most glorious covenant Head at His marriage supper, in His banquet-house above, where glory, and honour, and immortality, is inscribed upon the banner of love, which shall wave over all the guests, in the sacred breeze of Divine influence.

I am anticipating the eternal festival, and seem at present to have but one drawback to the pleasure of that anticipation; and that is, *the appalling fear that those who are literally parts of myself, will not be there.* May God be better to me than my fears, in this respect—perhaps He will answer prayer for them, when He has sufficiently tried my faith. But I forbear. *This subject is too much for me.*

We had a blessed season of refreshing last Lord's Day, from Isaiah xxxi. 5; and we are pursuing the subject of Deliverance through the week; and the mercy is, *that deliverance will pursue us*, until the final deliverance shall come; for it is written, "He hath delivered, He doth deliver, and He will deliver." And we will glory in our Almighty Deliverer. Accept Christian affection for yourself and family; and, praying that you may all be very happy in the enjoyment of the preciousness of Christ,

I am, my dear Friend, your faithful Pastor,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Mr. Irons refers, in the foregoing letter, to "the subject for the week." This was his constant practice, taking various texts, but all bearing on the same subject; so that, from Sabbath morning until the close of the week, there was a fixed train of thought; for example, say, *Justification, Sanctification, Perseverance, or Glorification*; so that all the important points contained in any one subject, would be taken up in succession during the week. The Lord abundantly owned this plan, to the building up of His own family.

Camberwell, Sept. 2, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have only just time to acknowledge the receipt of your letter this morning. Freely do I sympathize with you in your present *trial*; and while lifting up my heart to God for you, these words dropped upon my spirit, "Be still, and know that I am God." I thought, therefore, I would pen it for you immediately, as it came from above for that purpose. I know what nature says in such a case as yours; but, bear in mind, that nature must submit to grace in a child of God. It is written, "The elder shall serve the younger," also, "Whoso *loveth* father or mother, sister or *brother*, more than me (said Jesus), is not worthy of me."

I trust, my dear friend, that you know the difference between love to God and love to creatures, and that you will be *still*, and know that He is God.

I am, my dear Friend, your faithful Pastor,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Camberwell, Nov. 22, 1841.

DEAR FRIEND,

To live in a dying world, amidst the dead and dying, would be truly awful, if in this life only we had hope; but our most blessed Christ has said, "Whoso liveth and believeth in me *shall never die*;" so that all whom he hath quickened to newness of life may look the king of terrors in the face with composure; yea, more, with holy triumph, seeing that he hath no sting, and exultingly exclaim with the apostle, "To me to live is Christ, to die is gain." Accept my Christian sympathy, and my poor prayers for your support; and if carnal reason entangles your thoughts concerning the state of the dead, or the dying, let all be hushed with, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" I cannot but think that the trials through which you are passing will be instruments in confirming you in the grand doctrines of sovereign, discriminating grace; as you cannot but see that nothing brings a poor sinner to trust and love Jesus, but His own almighty touch; and hence I hope you will draw some comfort to alleviate your pangs—that that holy touch, which makes a sinner whole, has been vouchsafed to you. Lean wholly upon Jesus, my dear friend, and then, however heavy your trials may yet be, you cannot sink, but shall prove the blessedness of that sweet Scripture, "*underneath are everlasting arms*;" while the voice of our Beloved salutes you saying, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee;

when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord thy God." The Lord bless you and support you, prays your faithful pastor,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Camberwell, Dec. 30, 1842.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I snatch a few moments to-day, just to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, lest I should not be able to-morrow. Most truly do I sympathise with you, as I read your complaints, and hope to be able to plead with our covenant God on your behalf, that He may enable you to trust in Him, and stay upon Him, while walking in darkness, without any bright shining. The Fountain of life can never be exhausted, though the streams may run low, or even be very muddy or dry. I am truly sorry to read your account of the ministry at C——. A dry, doctrinal sermon is like a *doctor's skeleton*, every bone in its place, and every joint wired together, but neither flesh nor *breath*. I fear such preachers know nothing of the life of God in their own souls. If, however, you gather no honey from that ministry, forget not that there is always honey in the Rock; and our God is the same now as when He made Jacob of old to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock (Deut. xxxiii. 13). Samson found honey even in the carcase of a lion; and who knows but those very trials and temptations which are *most lion-like* to you may yet afford honey? You will, I know, rejoice to learn that the Lord's work is still going on very blessedly at Grove Chapel; and we hope to receive twelve more into fellowship with us this evening.

Do get the *Thursday Penny Pulpit*. There are now thirty-four of my sermons published in that, which are generally pretty correct, and may serve to revive the savour of Grove Chapel divinity. May the Holy Ghost rest on you as the Spirit of grace and supplication, to give you access to the throne, and fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Mrs. I. unites with me in Christian regards; and I pray our covenant God to strengthen you by His Spirit with might in the inner man, that you may shortly be able to sing with the patriarch, "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." Take the apostle's words as your motto for the new year, "He hath delivered, He doth deliver, and He will yet deliver."

I am, dear Friend, your faithful Pastor,

JOSEPH IRONS.

It has been stated, that 1,237 members were received into fellowship at Grove Chapel during the period Mr. Irons was among them. It may be interesting to some of our readers to know, that the whole were publicly received, in little groups, varying from ten to fifteen or twenty at a time. After Mr. Irons was fully satisfied of their spirituality, by repeated interviews, their names were publicly announced one week before they were admitted, to give any one an opportunity of speaking for or against them; then, on the Friday evening before the first Sabbath in the month, they were taken by the hand, the pastor giving a separate address to each, by way of instruction and encouragement. The following is an outline of one out of the number:—

“My dear friend, what a loving, faithful, covenant God is ours; and though He permits His dear children to pass through vexatious changes, trying circumstances, sharp conflicts, and even through the very depths of sorrow; yea, sometimes so sharp are these exercises, that the poor, timid child of God is led to cry out, ‘All these things are against me—I shall one day perish by the hand of this or that enemy;’ yea, He allows their experience to be like the drought of summer, or the barren heath—an apparent absence of all that is blessed and precious to the soul. But fear not, my dear friend, all is well—God will not forsake His own children—His love is always the same, although we do not always experience it to the same extent. At times He allows His children, who are but weaklings in the family, to be placed in circumstances that it might be said to them as was said to Samson of old, ‘the Philistines be upon thee.’ You are not a stranger to the Philistine host, you know something of their power, by painful experience; but oh, the mercy you have not given way to them; you have proved that Saul’s armour would not do to meet them with; you have looked at the armour of Goliath with dread and fear; but fear not, my friend, you, like unto David of old, must go forth to meet him, but be sure that you take not Saul’s mail,

but the simple sling and stone ; and this, in the hand of faith, will be quite enough to lay him low, even to the ground, and you shall come off triumphant. Oh ! the unspeakable mercy—you possess His grace, have proved His power, and found Him to be a faithful Friend in all your troubles and crosses. Ah ! and more than this, you have had sacred seasons when, like Paul, lifted up to the third heaven of spiritual enjoyment, you could not, for the time being, tell whether in or out of the body ; the windows of heaven have been opened, and the Lord has poured you out a blessing. Again, I say, fear not, you shall come off *more* than conqueror through Him that hath loved you. Live near to God, and daily seek Divine help and aid. May you be filled with all the fulness of God, and be kept by power Divine, always on the look out for the end, the consummation of grace in glory. May your life be useful and holy. The Lord enable you to experience much of His presence, to cheer you by the way. Never, never trust in your own strength. Seek daily grace as you would daily bread, and then the issue is certain—you will prove a happy saint, and be a bright and shining ornament to this Christian Church, of which you *now* form a part. Remember that you have a pastor who will feel pleasure in giving you counsel at all suitable seasons ; henceforth *you* will share largely in *his* sympathies and supplications on your behalf."

FAREWELL ADDRESS

TO MRS. M——, ON LEAVING ENGLAND TO SETTLE IN OPORTO, NOV., 1835.

PERMIT me, dear friend, just to bid you farewell,
 And kindly commend you to God ;
 We shall meet again, with Jehovah to dwell,
 And sing of redemption by blood.

Sweet seasons of pleasure and profit by-gone
 Are pledges of covenant love ;
 Your way to the kingdom your soul shall hold on,
 Wherever you sojourn or move.

Thy God is the God of the earth and the seas,
 He is not to England confined ;
Oporto is ruled by thy Father's decrees—
 Thy Jesus, *e'en there*, thou wilt find.

Though *Antichrist* revels in ignorance there,
 And heralds of truth may be few,
The throne is accessible *always* by prayer,
 And that is a temple for you.

The thought of *Grove Chapel* may cost you a tear,
 For there you have often been blest;
 But Jesus is with you, then "be of good cheer,"
 In Him you may always find rest.

The doctrines of grace to your soul are made known,
 The treasure of life you possess ;
 The covenant fulness you claim as your own,
 The charter runs—"Blessing, I'll bless" (Heb. vi. 14).

At home or abroad, on the sea or the shore,
 Thy Jesus will make thee His care ;
 His saints are all said to be held in His hands,
 They never shall perish He swore.
 (Deut. xxxiii. 3 ; John x. 28):

Thy *Father* still loves, with unchangeable love,
 Thy *Saviour* is always the same ;
 The *Comforter* ministers grace from above ;
 And wilt thou not trust in His name ?

Go, then, as a light, where the darkness is dense,
 Thy holy distinction maintain ;
 The Triune Jehovah shall be thy defence,
 And Godliness always is gain.

God bless you, and make you a blessing on earth,
 From snares and temptations defend ;
 Preserving unsullied your heavenly birth,
 Is the prayer of your pastor and friend,

JOSEPH IRONS.

TO THE "SPARROW ALONE,"

ON THE PRESENTATION OF ONE OF HIS WORKS.

Shepherd's Tent, Dec. 15, 1842.

From Shepherd's Tent
This scrap is sent,
To feed the fav'rite sparrow;
Go, get alone,
And break the bone,
And eat the very marrow.

Live on the Head,
Who for you bled,
As Scripture tells the story;
His fulness claim,
Exalt His name,
And wait to see His glory.

J. I.

AN ACROSTIC.

J ESUS, to thee my soul aspires,
O n wings of faith, with strong desires,
S eeking to view thy lovely face,
E njoy thy smiles and grow in grace,
P erplexed with the world and sin,
H aving no real joy therein.

I mourn—I look—I long to be
R eleas'd from sin, and fill'd with thee;
O God of love! possess my heart,
N o more from Jesus let me part;
S pirit Divine, still guide me right,
. 'Till faith is changed into sight.

TO MRS. L——, EMBARKING FOR VAN DIEMAN'S LAND, TO
JOIN HER HUSBAND, FEB. 10, 1843.

BEYOND the seas, upon earth's other side,
Awaits thy husband to receive his bride;
Oh! may you be preserv'd, again to meet,
And bow together there at Jesu's feet.

A MEMOIR OF

Beyond Van Dieman's Land, or bounds of time,
 In regions ever glorious and sublime,
 Thy cov'nant Head and Husband, Jesus, waits,
 To welcome home, the souls He new creates.

'Midst winds and waves, His mighty arm can keep,
 Borne on the bosom of the foaming deep;
 He sits a Sov'reign over sorrow's flood,
 And saves the souls, He ransom'd with His blood.

Farewell, dear friend; for you I'll offer pray'r,
 That when remov'd far from a pastor's care,
 The heav'nly Shepherd may your wants supply,
 Until He takes you to His fold on high.

JOSEPH IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, Camberwell.

LINES WRITTEN ON THE BIRTH OF W. H. T——, BORN AT
 BIRMINGHAM, DEC. 9, 1846.

WHAT an event is every mortal's birth!
 A never-dying soul inhabits earth,
 With mental pow'rs, and all those pow'rs depraved,
 Without a second birth, it can't be saved.

Unconscious of its state, conceiv'd in sin,
 A stranger to the world it now is in,
 Quite helpless on the parent's breast it lies,
 Dependent for its every-day supplies.

On earth it never finds a certain home,
 But hastens hourly to the world to come—
 A world of bliss; if life Divine is given,
Regeneration! fits the soul for heaven.

I see and know the parent's anxious care,
 Presenting the dear babe to God in prayer;
 And waiting for the soul-transforming hour—
 The Holy Spirit's new-creating power.

Undone and helpless is the human race,
 Dependant on Almighty, sov'reign grace;
 The infant, youth, and man, must all confess
 Salvation in imputed righteousness.

Appointed by the *Father's* fix'd decree,
 Accomplish'd by the *Son* upon the *tree*,
 Applied by God the *Spirit's* power Divine,
 Appropriating faith exclaims, "'Tis mine!"

JOSEPH IRONS.

LINES WRITTEN BY A PARENT,

TO BE SUNG BY HIS CHILDREN EVERY MORNING DURING AN ABSENCE
 OF SIX WEEKS.

O LORD, attend, while infants raise
 To thee the voice of prayer and praise;
 And let our daily sacrifice
 Come with acceptance in thine eyes.

Preserve us from all harm to-day,
 And guide us in the narrow way;
 Oh! may thy grace to us be given,
 To qualify each one for heaven.

On our dear father deign to smile;
 He's absent from us for awhile,
 To preach the gospel of thy grace;
 Go with him, Lord, in every place.

Let not his labour be in vain,
 But souls to Jesus daily gain;
 Thus may thy Churches all increase,
 And he return again in peace.

J. IRONS.

LINES ADDRESSED TO MR. AND MRS. —, ON THEIR
 FORTIETH WEDDING-DAY, FEB. 28, 1851.

WILL my dear friends accept a rhyme,
 To mark the rapid flight of time?
 And breathe their pastor's fervent prayer
 For blessings on the married pair?

Lord, sanctify this wedding-day;
 Let my dear friends review the way
 The Lord their God has led them on—
 The *forty years* that are by-gone.

A MEMOIR OF

How good the nuptial bond appears,
 How pure the love which grows with years
 How sweet those ties are, of a truth—
 A husband with a wife of youth.

But sweeter still, if you reflect,
 Both one with Christ, as His elect ;
 Before all time, belov'd of God,
 Redeem'd and sav'd with precious blood.

Union in nature and in grace,
 Demands a constant song of praise ;
 Long may you both be spared to show
 The mighty grace which made you so.

Your union helps each other's joy,
 And helps me, too, in Christ's employ ;
 Blest in the vineyard of the Lord,
 Wait for your crowns, as your reward.

J. IRONS.

TO MRS. M——, OPORTO, MAY 9, 1848.

“Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come” (Ezek. xi. 16).

HEAR, my dear friend, thus saith the Lord ;
 Believe Him, and receive His word ;
 He's with thy soul in every place,
 Supplying thee with grace for grace.

In countries where God is not known,
 He scatters some who are His own ;
 And *there* the great ETERNAL THREE
 Will as their sanctuary be.

There to our God you can retreat,
 And hold communion close and sweet ;
 With Christ, our cov'nant Head and Lord,
 Love, blood, and grace Divine record.

If sanctuary waters fail,—
 If superstitious rites prevail,—
 If heathenish things OPORTO fill,
 God is thy Sanctuary still.

His doors are open night and day,
He teaches prayer, and hears us pray ;
Draw near, approach Him, trust His love,
And He will feed thee from above.

What though no gospel trumpet sounds,
But Anti-Christian trash abounds,
Thy little sanctuary there
Shall strengthen faith, and answer pray'r.

And if thy heaven-taught soul will rove
To *Camberwell's* long-favour'd Grove,
The echo of thy pastor's pray'r
Shall often be resounding there.

J. I.

P.S.—I have sent you a few texts to peruse. May the Lord the Spirit bless them to your precious heaven-born soul, while in a state of exile.

"And I will sow them among the people ; and they shall remember me in far countries ; and they shall live with their children, and turn again " (Zech. x. 9).

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly one ; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city " (Heb. xi. 16).

"Sojourn in the land, and I will be with thee, and bless thee " (Gen. xxvi. 3).

"Let *mine outcasts* dwell with thee, Moab ; be thou a covert to them " (Isa. vi. 4).

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where *Satan's seat* is, and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith " (Rev. ii. 13).

The Lord make these words of His, a stay and a staff to thy soul, filling thee with joy and peace in believing. Although *far remote* from public means of grace, may His written word become increasingly precious, day by day, prays thy faithful Pastor and Friend,

JOSEPH IRONS.

WRITTEN FOR MISS C. H——, EMBARKING FOR CEYLON,
JULY 28, 1843.

"The God of the whole earth shall He be called."

AND what is this whole earth in God's account ?
To what do all its nations now amount ?
A drop, which some small bucket may contain,
Of which, ere long, no vestige shall remain.

A MEMOIR OF

He taketh up the isles as little things,
 He feeds their beggars, and controls their kings;
 His sceptre rules Britannia and Ceylon—
 All worlds are subject to Jehovah's throne.

This God—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—
 Has chosen and redeem'd a countless host;
 Regenerated with a life Divine,—
 And thus He claims them all, "They shall be mine!"

In England, India, Iceland, or Ceylon,
 He will possess, employ, and save His own,
 And bring them all at last to see His face,
 As monuments of His triumphant grace.

J. IRONS.

"THE BIBLE, THE WORD OF GOD."

His written word—His own inspired truth,
 Most sweetly His eternal mind reveals.
 Proceeding from the mouth of Christ the Lord
 In gracious words, the wonder of mankind,
 The law of truth is in His sacred mouth.
 Inspired Penman! All received it thence;
 And while His people read or hear His word,
 A holy pow'r applies it to their hearts;
 Proceeding from His mouth as truth Divine,
 And cannot be returned unto Him void.
 Most sweet is Bible truth to heav'n-born souls,
 When Jesus speaks it to them as His own!
 They find it—eat it—feel its quick'ning pow'r,
 And own it sweeter than the honeycomb.
 The precious truths contained in Jesu's word,
 Applied with pow'r, embraced by living faith,
 Are called the kisses of the Bridegroom's mouth,
 Which give the tokens of betrothing love,
 And are returned with gratitude and praise.

J. IRONS.

The following Hymn was composed on his Natal Day:—

WELL, God has brought me thro' another year,
 And made His goodness ev'ry day appear;

Thus far I've been protected, cloth'd, and fed—
Thus far toward a better country led.

Sure I may trust Him all my journey through,
And by His grace begin to live anew ;
Cast off the bonds of unbelief and care,
Committing all things to my God by pray'r.

While I remain a sojourner on earth,
Oh, may I ne'er forget my heavenly birth !
But live by faith upon the Son of God,
Who seals my pardon with His precious blood.

Born from above, my glory is begun,
I'll gird my loins, and trim my lamp, and run ;
Receiving from my Saviour grace for grace,
Until I gaze upon His lovely face.

O may triumphant grace within me reign ;
O may I live like one that's born again ;
O may I all my Father's will obey ;
O may I reach the realms of endless day.

J. IRONS.

A FRAGMENT,

WRITTEN A SHORT TIME BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE, IN A NOTE-BOOK ;
And is beautifully descriptive of his happy experience at that period.

"I AM resting on the bosom of covenant love, and bathing in the ocean of Divine faithfulness ; feeding at the banqueting-house of the King of kings, and clothed with the royal robes of Paradise ; cheered with the smiles of Israel's God—my Father, and waiting until mortality drops into the grave ; and yonder pearly gates shall open wide, to present to my view a precious Christ, without a veil between !"

WEDDING HYMN. (P.M.)

LORD, thou wast in *Cana* present
At a solemn marriage feast,
Making all the moments pleasant,
Jesus chief among the guests !
Such a wedding
Is not of our joys the least.

A MEMOIR OF

Come, dear Lord, and grace this wedding
 With thy presence and thy love ;
 On the bride and bridegroom shedding
 Choicest blessings from above.

Thus thy sanction
 To their sacred union prove.

Thou thyself and thy redeemed
 Are by marriage union one ;
 All thy fulness is esteemed
 By thy Church to be her own.

She is partner
 In thy merits and thy throne.

Bless our Christian friends *in union*
 With supplies of special grace ;
 Grant them with thyself communion,
 Till they see thy lovely face.

Then in glory
 Give to them and us a place.

J. IRONS.

Mr. Irons was frequently asked to attend the weddings of some of his *spiritual children*. On such occasions he felt great pleasure, and often composed a hymn for the occasion, which was sung before they separated, and the copy presented to the bridal pair, with a suitable address, and earnest prayer for their spiritual and temporal prosperity. The foregoing is selected from many.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

Written to a young Minister, who was brought to a knowledge of the truth under Mr. IRONS, at Grove Chapel, many years since, and afterwards removed to a distance.

January, 1829.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I received your letter of the 14th, and would have replied to it sooner, but for the constant bustle in which you know I am daily kept, and the domestic calamity which still bears me down. I have thought over your wish to visit L—, but at present do not see the Lord's hand in the plan proposed by you. * * * * Wait patiently ; watch the Lord's hand attentively. As you say that you are satisfied that the Lord sent you to D—, be not discouraged at a few troublers of Israel ; but take the

voice of the Church as the voice of God, relative to your continuance among them. I am sorry that you have consented to administer the *Ordinances* before ORDINATION. All things that are lawful are not *expedient*; and although there may be no direct Scripture direction on this point, I think some deference should be paid to the usage of the churches; and I fear that your deviation will produce prejudice. Write me more fully as to the mind of the Church, the number of the congregation, and the work of God by your labours, and I will write you in reply.

I am, my dear Brother, yours, &c.,

J IRONS.

Camberwell, April 4, 1829.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

In great haste, and in the depths of affliction, I snatch a moment to reply to your letter of yesterday. I am glad that you are keeping your eye *upon the pillar of cloud*, and standing fast in the truth. May our covenant God still stand by you. Do not leave the cause of God at ~~D~~ until you are *quite satisfied* it is the Lord's will to remove you. Fear not the reproaches of men; it is a high honour to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ. Read Paul's charge to his son Timothy, 2nd Epistle, 4th chap., the first 8 verses, and accept it as my letter of advice. * * * *
The atmosphere is darkening all around Zion, and I think the storm will soon burst upon us. "Stand fast in the Lord." I feel myself honoured by the garbled statements made by the Unitarian and Popish writers referred to; their reproaches are my praise. God is making me "to drink the wine of astonishment," by keeping me in a very hot furnace, and increasing my usefulness on every side. I cannot spare you a moment more, only to subscribe myself as ever.

Yours affectionately in the bonds of the gospel,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Camberwell, Sept. 23, 1829.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Your letter has this moment reached me, and demands an immediate answer; and, although I am much pressed for time, I must attend to it before I go to London.

The impudence and ignorance of *your deacons* perfectly disgust me; and I advise you never to become their pastor unless *those deacons* be dismissed, and *wiser*, better men chosen in their place.

What! Are we to come to this? That the *servants* of the Church are to dictate to the AMBASSADORS of Jesus Christ; and that, too, in a matter in which our solemn engagements before God are concerned!!!

Make up your mind to leave them as soon as God makes the way plain, and by no means allow yourself to administer *ordinances* until you are *ordained*. I will look out for you, and as soon as I hear of a destitute congregation, will endeavour to introduce you to it. Nevertheless, if the Church stands by you, and rejects those LAY LORDS, continue with them as long as you can. Remember, *decision* and *firmness* now become you, as a man of God. Your being ordained in London appears to me highly improper, as I consider ordination a kind of marriage compact between a *pastor* and the *people* of his charge; so that both parties must, of necessity, be present. Should you be introduced to another Church, then you can be ordained over them; but to talk of an ordained pastor without a charge, is like talking of a married man without a wife. Allow me further to advise you to lay the matter before the Lord, then before the Church, and afterward write me the result. In great haste, I remain,

Yours, faithfully and affectionately, in Christ Jesus,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Camberwell, Dec. 16, 1829.

MY DEAR SON IN THE FAITH,

Your interesting epistle, just come to hand, must have an *immediate* reply, lest it be served, as I am sorry the last was. I am truly glad to find that the little flock of Christ at D—— still rally round you, and *not sorry* that the persons who have proved themselves so ignorant of the nature of their office, have withdrawn from it. Now take my advice; in the event of choosing fresh deacons, take care to insist that their office is purely and exclusively secular; for I am more and more convinced that the greater part of the trials and mischiefs which exist in churches, arise from the *lordly conduct of deacons*. I say let them be employed to provide for the table of the Lord, the table of the pastor, and the table of the poor, and they will have *enough to do* without interfering with the sacred functions of the ambassadors of Jesus Christ. * * * * I yet hope and believe that the Lord has some great work for you to do in D——. I have only time to add my earnest prayer that God may keep you faithful to the end, and make you very successful in his work.

I remain, in haste,

Yours &c., affectionately, for Christ's sake,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Camberwell, Aug., 1830.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I rejoice greatly that the Lord is shining upon your labours. "Stand fast, I beseech you, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free;"

and be not entangled with the visionary notions which are now almost everywhere infesting the Church of God. As to the troublers of Israel, "be not afraid of their faces;" only be faithful to declare all the counsel of God, and God will stand by you. I am daily proving this, for, while war surrounds me on every hand, victory attends me at every step; and often do I prove the truth of what Joshua said to Israel, "One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God, He it is that fighteth for you" (Joshua xxiii. 10. Herewith I send you twelve copies of "Nathaniel," six ditto, fine, twelve copies on "Church Discipline, and 100 Card Tracts for distribution.

That every new covenant blessing may rest upon your person and labours, is the prayer of

Your affectionate father and fellow-labourer,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Jan. 19, 1831.

DEAR BROTHER IN OUR COMMON LORD,

Amidst many trials and great anxiety, I write unto you to sympathize with you and *yours*. Truly it is a rugged path which most of the Lord's servants have to travel, but it is our mercy to know that our Master is with us, and has sworn that He will be with us alway, even to the end. I often chide myself for wishing to find a smoother path than prophets, apostles, and our dear Lord Himself trod; and I wish to say from my heart, "It is enough that the disciple be as his Master;" only let us stand fast in the faith in these days of rebuke and blasphemy, "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" and we may safely trust all our concerns with our ELDER BROTHER, who was born for adversity, and of whom the Psalmist sung, "Thou hast known my soul in adversity." * * * * I am in great haste, *as usual*, and can only add, that

I remain, affectionately,

Yours in Christ Jesus,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Camberwell, Jan. 18, 1842.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

On the perusal of your letter, the advice of Paul to his son Timothy dropped upon my spirit, "Thou, therefore my son, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." If God is working effectually by your ministry, be assured he will not allow you to lack the bread that perisheth although He may permit hypocritical professors to oppose you for a

while; to try your faith and patience. Beware of quitting a sphere of usefulness before your work is done; the sly old fox may be permitted to employ his trusty regiments of Arminians to cut off supplies, yet our God has got some *ravens* at hand, who can fly over their heads to bring you support, or He may have a cruise of oil in some poor widow's house in N—— saved on purpose for you. "Watch and pray," and look well to the Lord—for so long as He has a work for you to do He will take care of you; for as good *Matthew Henry* observes, "It is our business to look well to *His* cause, and it is *His* business to take care of us." Remember also, how Paul was encouraged in perilous circumstances with, "Fear not, Paul, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to do thee hurt;" and mark the reason assigned—"For I have much people in this city."

I pray you do not let the people see that you are *over anxious* about yourself; you will accomplish more by suffering in silence, than by taking any "decided step." I have many of the brethren writing to me under circumstances like yours; it does appear to me that the *lay lords* in most congregations are great impediments in the way of the *pastor's happiness*—that is, when they exercise their undue authority.

I remain, dear brother,

Yours affectionately in the gospel,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Camberwell, Nov. 15, 1850.

MY DEAR SON IN THE FAITH,

I should have acknowledged the receipt of your kind congratulation on my birth-day sooner, but for constant demands upon my time, and much illness, which is of such a nature as quite wears me down; but, blessed be God, I keep on in His work, in the old paths, in the good way, with continued success. As you say that you should like to have my "NO POPERY SERMON" ("Grove Chapel Pulpit," No. 124), I enclose it for your acceptance, by which you will see that Micaiah is Micaiah still, and hopes to live and die opposing Baal's prophets, though they be four hundred to one (1 Kings xxii. 6). I hear much, concerning my printed sermons, from all parts of the empire. God's people are fed and nourished by them—and the proud free-willers are very angry with them, and with me—I think there are now about half a million of these messengers in circulation. May Jehovah put power into them, so as to honour His great name. Mrs. Irons unites with me in Christian love to you and yours, and

I remain, yours faithfully and affectionately in Jesus,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, Camberwell, Aug. 18, 1851.

MY DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD, AND SON IN THE FAITH,

In answer to your affectionate inquiries, I write a line tremblingly to say, that it has pleased the Lord, in answer to many prayers, to revive my poor sinking frame a little, so that I preached twice yesterday. As to your wish for my *last testimony*, I can cheerfully give it you in Paul's words, "I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God;" and now I am *firmly* and *peacefully* resting upon the covenant love and faithfulness of God *my Father*, the covenant *responsibility* of God *my Saviour*, and the *covenant grace* and power of God *my Comforter*, to perfect what He has begun in me; and I am waiting to join the celestial song, "Salvation to our God." *I have nothing to unsay* of all that I have said with *tongue* and *pen*, but hope to be more *earnest* and *vehement* in asserting the glorious doctrines of grace as long as I can speak, well knowing that they, and *they only*, will do for a poor sinner *to live and die by*. I am so weak that I cannot write more than to express my Christian affection to *you* and *yours*, in which Mrs. Irons unites, and remain

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

JOSEPH IRONS.

The foregoing letters, which were written to the Rev. J. J. J. K., set forth, in a condensed form, the principles and practices of our dear departed brother. He was a man of great discernment, forethought, and prudence. He knew well that the comfort of the minister, the prosperity of the Church, and the glory of God, were closely interwoven, that the pastor's office was purely spiritual; and how sweetly does he advise his young brother in the ministry to follow the cloud, to watch and pray, and never to move from a sphere of usefulness, unless it was clearly seen to be the will of the Lord that he should do so—that He would provide for His own sent servant—and that the peace of the Church depended much on the scriptural conduct of the deacons—that they should not interfere with the work of the pastor—that they were the *servants* of the Church, and *not the rulers*. Where his advice has been taken, peace has generally followed, but often the reverse where it has been rejected. *This "LAST TESTIMONY"* (to his brother) ought to be written in letters of gold.

A MEMOIR OF

TO THE REV. H. B.

Camberwell, April 17, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,

You have imposed on me rather a difficult task, in requesting my advice on the subject of "Church Union," for my views are very stern concerning it. I was brought up among the Anabaptists; but God was pleased to meet with me under the ministry of Alphonsus Gunn—of blessed memory—in the English hierarchy, and while he lived I bid fair to be a *high Churchman*; but, after his departure, I was led to think for myself. I could not digest the *forms* of the National Church, although I tried to do so; for in my New Testament I could find no trace of nationality for the *Church of God*. And when I compared the New Testament accounts with the history of the first three centuries, I became fully convinced that *all* hierarchies are *unscriptural* and unprofitable, for it is, in my view, the quintessence of Popery for any set of men to exercise authority over others of God's *sent servants*, whether ASSEMBLY, SYNOD, or COUNCIL. All the Churches in the first three centuries were voluntary associations, distinct from each other, and only united by the ties of truth and love; all their pastors were bishops of their own choice, and exercised their authority only in the sphere of their own usefulness, and no one venturing to *rule* over another. As for *endowments*, they have generally been a clog and a curse to Churches, and to schools also; for God does not require the aid of Satan's slaves to support His own worship among His own people.

These considerations, with some others, made me an *Independent* about forty years ago; nor have I yet seen any cause to alter my views, either in doctrine or discipline. I heartily wish you, my dear Sir, a clear escape from that hierarchy; and as God has enabled you to break the shackles of one Antichristian system, I pray you do not put on another. Be a free man; yea, "the Lord's free man." This is the sacred privilege which I have long enjoyed, and I sternly refuse to be in bondage to any man, or conclave of men.

As to the "universal invitation system" of which you write, I am truly glad to find that you are so firm in opposing it, for it is founded in ignorance, and supported by perverting isolated Scriptures to gratify and deceive carnal minds. Do those gentlemen who contend for it really believe the doctrine of the "fall?" Do they really believe that fallen man is dead in trespasses and sins? Then to invite them, *as such*, to participate in spiritual blessings, appears to me as absurd as it would be for me to walk into the grave-yard, and invite the dead inhabitants under the turf and tomb to come and dine with me. When our Lord had

raised the ruler's daughter from the dead, "He commanded that something should be given her to eat" (Mark v. 43), but if He had given that command before, they might have *justly* "laughed Him to scorn." Now if they would and could but open their eyes, they would see that every invitation in the gospel has its peculiar character described to whom it is addressed—the weary must be alive, the hungry and thirsty must be alive; and their favourite text, which invites all the ends of the earth, is explained in the context as inviting God's sons and daughters from the ends of the earth; and God Himself puts power into the invitation by saying, "I will bring them." In fact, there is not an invitation to the participation of spiritual blessings in all the word of God, without describing the invited persons; and it is as absurd and wicked to make them indiscriminate, as it would be for a postman to blot out the direction of all the letters he had to deliver, and to scatter them about the street, for any one to pick up, when free will or idle curiosity prompted him to do so. Now a word concerning offering Christ, which implies the power to give Him, which no man possesses. I once heard an anecdote of a *poor* but good old woman, who had heard from the preacher something of this kind, "Now I offer you Christ and His salvation, why don't you accept Him?" She went into the vestry after the sermon, and, holding up her apron, said, "Sir, I am come to accept of your offer; I want Christ, will you give Him to me?" I fear, my dear Sir, that I shall tire your patience with this long epistle, therefore allow me to close by requesting you to accept and peruse the little tract I enclose with it, "THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD," and subscribe myself, with much affection,

Your faithful brother in the Lord,

J. IRONS.

ON DEATH.

NOTHING has a greater tendency to fill the mind of man with awe than the thoughts of DEATH. The greatest hardships—the severest trials—the most potent enemies, have been endured with fortitude, patience, and courage. But when the pale messenger has arrived, demanding the soul to quit the body, and leave the lifeless clay, to be consigned to the silent tomb to mingle with its mother earth, *fortitude* and *courage* fail, and *patience* is exchanged for anxious solicitude. Even a distant view of death has made strong men to tremble; they have shut their ears to the passing bell, turned away their eyes from the funeral procession, and avoided the place where the pit has opened to receive a fellow-mortal! But surely such conduct bespeaks a load of guilt—the most egregious folly. To banish

the thoughts of death while in health, is to invite an enemy to take us by surprise; while a holy familiarity therewith has a tendency to disarm him of his terrors, take away his sting, and to make him who was once the king of terrors to have the appearance of a kind messenger. It is here we see the effect of sin in striking colours—at the grave. That stately form, which God himself created, and breathed into it the breath of life, now becomes a lifeless—yea, offensive lump of clay. Those limbs, which were once active and vigorous, are now become a motionless heap of mouldering dust. “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” But this is not all. Death has a sting, whose poison is not extracted by the wreck of nature. No! It has reached the soul; and unless it be extracted by sovereign grace in time, it will pierce us through with many sorrows for ever—for ever. But if this sovereign remedy be applied, and the soul by it be regenerated, then the nearest prospect of death may be viewed without dismay—yea, more, with joyful anticipation; and, like an inspired apostle, we may sing, “There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which Christ the righteous Judge shall give me; and not to me only, but to *all* that love His appearing.” “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” “To die is gain.” To be with and like Christ.

Death meets the sinner as an armed foe,
Strikes deep his sting, and sinks to endless woe.
The saint meets death, a messenger of peace,
Receives his summons, and ascends to bliss.

J. IRONS.

“WHY WAS I BORN?”

WHY was I born in such a world as this?
A desert land—a howling wilderness—
A scene of toil and care, where ev’ry breath
Wafts me along to meet the day of death.

Why was I born? To gain a second birth—
To raise my soul above the things of earth—
To live within a holy atmosphere,
And wait till Christ, who is my life, appear.

Why was I born? To be an heir of bliss,
And have my portion where King Jesus is—
To glorify Him here from day to day,
Till He invites me home with, “Come away!”

Why was I born ? But to be train'd and taught
 By God the Holy Ghost, and then be brought
 To see my Jesus, with my Father dwell,
 Of everlasting love and grace to tell.

J. IRONS.

LINES ADDRESSED BY MR. IRONS TO HIS FATHER,
*A short time before his Parent was removed to Glory, on receiving a Letter
 from him, complaining of his Debility and Pain.*

JACOB, my Father, is alive,
 And he would *Joseph* see ;
 Wednesday noon, if all things thrive,
 I'll with my father be.

You say, "you'r short of breath, and weak—
 Not fit to live, nor die ;"
 But say, can Christ His promise break ?
 Will you give God the lie ?

Jesus has spoke the word of grace ;
 Can't you on that rely ?
 Sorrow and sighs shall soon give place
 To everlasting joy—(Isaiah xxvi. 10).

Your feeble breath (in pray'r and praise)
 You often send on high ;
 Since God has thus bestowed His grace,
 You'r *fit* to *live* or *die*.

"To live is Christ, to die is gain,"
 My father doth believe ;
 Dry up your tears, forget your pain,
 You'r fit to die, and live.

Oh, that your sons and daughters now
 May know the God you love !
 May father—mother—children, too,
 All meet at last above !

So prays your affectionate Son,
 JOSEPH.

FRAGMENTS.

ACCEPT, dear friend, from off my vine,
 A bunch of grapes. Tho' not so fine

A MEMOIR OF

As those which grew in Eschol's field,
 Or those which Zion's garden yield.
 The token of a pastor's love
 May help to lift your thoughts above;
 To pluck from Christ, the living Vine,
 The precious fruits of grace Divine.
 They hang like clusters in His word—
 How rich the juices they afford!
 All drawn from His eternal love!
 O may your soul their sweetness prove.

THE saints of God, in ev'ry age,
 Have suffer'd much from Satan's rage.
 He did on Job his malice try
 To make him curse his God, and die.
 But Job, supported from on high,
 Still held his own integrity.
 'Midst Satan's rage he lived to prove
 His God to be a God of love.

LORD, let the fire of love descend,
 And burn up ev'ry sin;
 Still keep it burning to the end,
 And make us pure within.

Let the sweet theme of Jesu's name
 Warm each believer's breast;
 And thence reflect the sacred flame
 Of love on all the rest.

Higher, still higher, let it blaze,
 And Satan's throne destroy;
 Then, bursting forth in endless praise,
 Fill heav'n itself with joy.

To T. C——.

Shepherd's Tent, June 25, 1850.

DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD,

Your kind and interesting letter should have been acknowledged earlier, but for the extreme debility to which I have been reduced by lengthened affliction. I now feel a little revived, and the keen pangs which I have endured are abated, which I believe to be in answer to the

prayers of my affectionate flock. Your letter greatly refreshed my spirit, testifying that my blessed Master does not allow me to labour in vain, nor will He hold back my wages. I thought it a pity that such a testimony for God should be kept private; and have therefore printed it, as you will perceive, in the Preface of the *Second Volume of "Grove Chapel Pulpit;"* for I think that our gracious Lord is as likely to bless that testimony as He is one of the Sermons. What a mercy that the godliness, of which the Holy Ghost is the Author, is the same in NORTHUMBERLAND as it is in CAMBERWELL; and that amidst the aboundings of Atheism, Arminianism, and Antichrist, Jehovah has His own chosen vessels of mercy scattered up and down in this unfriendly world, all of them as safe in His hand as they will be when they get home to glory. These, though unknown to each other in the flesh, cannot but feel a kindred spirit and a kindred affection each to other; so that they sometimes meet at the foot of the throne, when their bodies may be hundreds of miles apart. Now I should like to make a bargain with you. If you will meet the pastor of Grove Chapel at eleven o'clock *every* morning at the throne of grace, I will endeavour to be there at that hour, hoping to be enabled to dart up a request for "THE NEWCASTLE COLLIER;" and may the Eternal Spirit give us the spirit of prayer for each other.

I am still so weak and so trembling that I cannot hold my pen any longer, only to subscribe myself,

Yours, very affectionately, in our precious Lord Jesus,

JOSEPH IRONS.

TO THE COLLIER.

August 23, 1851.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have just returned to my Tent, and, bless the Lord, was enabled to preach twice last Lord's day. I am still very weak and feeble, and the doctors give me no hope of being better in this world. Well, I am only anxious to learn, experimentally, that prayer so often referred to, "*Thy will be done.*" I feel that my trials are more than counterbalanced by the spiritual blessings which are rained down upon me; and I trust that I may finish my ministry, which I have received of the Lord, with joy. I thirst for new supplies of grace to help me day by day, that I may be very successful in my work. * * * *

Yours as ever,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Respecting Ware he writes—"As often as I look at the place of my nativity I read the word 'Jericho' written up at both ends of the town; and never can I

sufficiently praise my God for bringing me out of it in my youthful days. But I have those that are dear to me in that place, and often do I pray that the Lord would meet with them by His grace, and raise up a faithful man of God to preach the truth in all its fulness. Oh ! how it would rejoice my heart to hear that God was blessing a faithful ministry in my native town, and that the few names still in Sardis (Ware) were more bold for God, more distinguished by Him, and enabled to live up to their high privileges." The last time he visited Ware was in 1846, and being refused the use of the Chapel there, which he had occupied on former occasions, the town-hall was obtained for him to preach in. On two occasions he delivered his Master's message to some four or five hundred persons in the hall, and many who had known him in early life were present to hear their old townsman. The first evening's text was "The glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. i. 11), the second evening, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come" (Matt. xxiv. 14). Power Divine went forth with the word, and many that came to mock left the town-hall in tears. It was very evident that he did not visit it in vain—he boldly delivered all the truth, fearless of consequences, feeling fully satisfied that he should never more lift up his voice for God in the place of his nativity.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS TO A RELATIVE AT WARE.

I THANK you for excusing me not answering your last letter. The fact is, I am constantly employed ; my pen or my tongue are incessantly going during all waking hours ; and even now two persons are waiting for me. Well, I thank God my time is not spent over newspapers, and fleshly gratifications. Eternity is in view, and I desire to make all my time, and all my energies, tend to glorify God. I bless the Lord that I am looking forward to my departure with blissful anticipation, being quite satisfied that He who has given me grace has pledged Himself to give me glory ; and that very assurance which *empty* professors call pre-

sumption, is the joy of my heart, and the commencement of eternal glory here. * * * I feel that I am winding up my race, and my blessed Master is fulfilling His promise, "At evening time it shall be light." I find it so in my own soul, and in the Church over which the Holy Ghost hath made me overseer. My health is very precarious; the disorder flies about from head to foot; to-day I can scarcely walk or stand. But all is right, because appointed and regulated by the God of love. * * *

Another states—

I THANK my gracious Master that I have not omitted one public service; sometimes sitting, sometimes standing, and sometimes kneeling; but, blessed be God, never without the Lord's presence. I think, from the great manifestation of Divine love which I enjoy, that I cannot be far from home, its consummation is near. Oh! what must heaven be? after such participation of it by the way; to find myself swallowed up in the covenant love of the Triune Jehovah; without interruption, without alloy, and without end! Glory, honour, immortality! How very paltry do the things of time appear to me when everlasting bliss is kept in view, and Jesus' breast is leaned upon. I want to work for my Lord and Master, whether in health or sickness. I want to be always doing good and getting good. I have lifted up my heart to the throne for you and yours, that the Lord may bless you with every needful blessing, for Christ's sake; that He would guide you by His counsel, and afterward receive you to glory. Your faithful and affectionate Friend,

J. IRONS.

The following Lines were written in the Bible used by Mr. Irons, in Grove Chapel pulpit, which was presented *to him* by a few of his affectionate flock, August 1, 1843, as a token of their Christian love.

This *Book* unfolds Jehovah's mind,
 This *Voice* salutes in accents kind,
 This *Friend* will all our needs supply,
 This *Fountain* sends forth streams of joy,
 This *Mine* affords us boundless wealth,
 This *Good Physician* gives us health,
 This *Sun* renews and warms the soul,
 This *Sword* both wounds and makes us whole,
 This *Letter* shows our sins forgiven,
 This *Guide* conducts us safe to heaven,
 This *Charter* has been sealed with blood,
 This *Volume* is the WORD OF GOD!

J. J.

FRAGMENT ON CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS.

THE household of faith, the living Church of God, must be employed in the Lord's vineyard. Some as settled pastors—some in village preaching—others in visiting the sick—some in instructing the rising generation—others at prayer-meetings—and not a few in distributing tracts; while the wealthy will frequently find occasion to open their hearts, and loose their purse-strings, to aid their poorer brethren and sisters while travelling home to glory. Surely none need to stand idle, for all will find full employment; only let each endeavour to labour in his *own peculiar peculiar sphere of usefulness*.

ON THE DEPARTURE OF A SAINT FOR GLORY.

SCARCELY can weeping friends exclaim, "He's gone,"
 Ere he is usher'd into realms of bliss;
 And passing through angelic hosts, obtains
 The mansion Christ prepared, hard by His throne.
 There, in the blaze of uncreated light,
 Amidst ten thousand saints, he takes his seat;
 Himself an heir of God, joint heir with Christ,
 No more to sigh or suffer—fight or fear—
 No more exposed to Satan's fiery darts,
 Nor once to lose the sight of Jesu's face
 While the vast rounds of endless years roll on.
 Oh, blissful scene! may I thus walk with God
 Until He takes my ransom'd spirit home
 To dwell with Jesus, till the glorious morn
 Of resurrection consummates my bliss.
 Hark! oh, my soul; the archangel's trumpet sounds;
 The bursting tombs throw back their massive doors,
 And bid their sleeping tenants meet their Lord.
 First in procession rise the dead in Christ,
 Dear to His heart—redeem'd with precious blood,
 And raised in glorious bodies like His own,
 To dwell for ever in His kind embrace.

Shepherd's Tent.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your anxious desire to see me and Mrs. Irons met with a corresponding feeling in my bosom, and had it been practicable, I should have been gratified; but since this is not in my power, I will endeavour to send a substitute for personal interview, in writing. Two things, in your letter, excite peculiar concern in my mind—the first is, the near prospect of eternity

which is before your aunt, and the other is, your concern lest the spark of religion in your own soul should be extinguished. As an antidote to both, allow me to present you with the outline of the grand scheme of redemption. All real religion originates in LOVE, consists in LOVE, and is consummated in LOVE; it was the sovereign love of God which first pitied our fallen state, even before that state existed; foreseeing our ruin by sin, love moved Him to devise a remedy for Adam's wretched posterity, consistent with all the perfections of Deity, and every way suited to our condition as lost sinners. Love proposed an infinite sacrifice to be made to God for the guilt of man, and fixed upon the most lovely of persons as the victim, even JESUS of NAZARETH. Love induced Him to undertake the mighty work, and thus prove Himself to be "mighty to save." Love decreed the sanctification of depraved mortals, and engaged the Holy Spirit to perform this work in the hearts of sinners. Love arranged all the parts of the covenant of grace, in which men's salvation is contained—inserted the names of all the saints therein—affixed the signature of the Eternal Three thereto, and stamped the broad seal of heaven thereon. Thus, religion originates in sovereign love, with regard to its contrivance. Now cast a thought for a moment, my dear friend, to Bethlehem's mangers, Pilate's tribunal, and Calvary's awful scene; and on each of those memorable spots, behold love taking the most conspicuous ground, and executing the great work contrived in heaven. Amongst the horned cattle, see how love's celestial countenance shines on the Infant Redeemer, with rays of Divine glory, just emanating from heaven. Before the Roman judge—the countenance is indeed marred, but love still sits, in majesty divine, upon the brow of the betrayed Saviour; follow Him to Calvary, and then see how love's bowels yearn over His murderers, how the arms of love extend even to a dying thief, and hear His exulting voice exclaim (although under the pressure of Almighty wrath), "IT IS FINISHED." Love accompanied the Almighty Jesus through the cold tomb, and then re-ascended with Him to heaven, and ever lives in His bosom to intercede for the heirs of everlasting life. Nor can love be confined to those blissful regions, although they are her native air, on wings bedewed with Jesu's precious blood, she speeds her downward flight to visit earth again. Ask you what is her errand? it is to seek and to save such poor lost sinners as me and my dear friend. Oh, let us ask ourselves these great questions—has this God-like principle reached our hearts? has it slain our natural enmity? has it subdued our evil passions? has it adorned our souls with its sacred beauties? and does it daily attract us with its heavenly charms? These things it does for all the heirs of salvation, and wherever love takes up her residence, *that soul cannot love sin*, but must love the saints of God—cannot love vain amusements, but must love the Bible and prayer—in a word, the principle by which he is actuated is, "the love of God shed

abroad in the heart;" it is a spark of fire from off the altar of God, which shall ever be burning, and never go out (Lev. vi. 13); it is a winged inhabitant of the soul's atmosphere, fluttering awhile in the wilderness of time, and often ascending to its native skies to recruit its strength, and bring us blessings down to earth. Love divine rides in a chariot called the gospel, drawn by faithful ministers, who are harnessed with the graces of the Holy Spirit, and to whom she gives supplies of strength and vigour in their arduous glorious work. Love divine pursues hardened sinners, proclaims to them pardon, and allures their hearts to accept of it—and though she meets with many a repulse, her ardour is not at all abated, but steady to her purpose, and unchangable in her designs—moving onward with majestic triumph, on the highway of holiness, she crushes beneath her chariot wheels the monster sin, and sways her life-giving sceptre over new trophies of victory, from day to day. Happy conquest! may you and I, my dear friend, bask in its pleasures daily, and prove our loyalty constantly to Christ our King. All gospel blessings are love's bounty, bestowed on the wretched—all gospel duties are love's exercise in the souls of the saints. All true comfort grows in love's luxuriant garden, and all our preservation is owing to love's constant care. Thus true religion consists in love; allow me to add, that all true religion will be consummated in love, and that holy fire which is enkindled in the new-born soul you have justly called "a spark;" but remember, it is a spark of celestial fire, which shall survive the damps of time, and the floods of death; and when the dust and ashes of this sinful body are removed from it, the spark shall burst forth into a flame bright as the sun, and high as the throne of God; then, and not till then will true religion be consummated, when love is perfected, freed from all the sin which veiled her countenance, and all the sorrow which clogged her wings—disentangled from her earthly cage, and breathing her native air, heaven will behold and admire her unceasing flight around the throne of God; and all the saints shall partake of the glories which beam from her lovely countenance, lost in astonishment, and absorbed in love's overwhelming charms. May you and I, my dear friend, bow before the throne of God together, and tune our golden harps to this delightful theme, "God is love," is the earnest prayer of your sincere friend,

J. IRONS.

"FRAGMENT" (1 Tim. iii. 6).

A novice in the scheme of gospel grace,
 With talent to attract th' Athenian race,
 Puff'd up with pride, in notions wild and evil,
 Falls into condemnation with the devil.

TO A GODLY PARENT.

CAN any honour be compared to this?
 Parent of children—born for endless bliss!
 Endow'd with sov'reign grace thyself—yea, more,
 Grace for thy offspring, from the Saviour's store;
 Two of a family He says He'll take (Jer. iii. 14),
 And save them for His name—His mercies' sake;
 But on thy seed His mercies richer fall—
 He takes not only two, but claims them all.
 O might I share in favours so divine,
 And witness such a work *in sons of mine*,
 Methinks my heart would melt with joy and love,
 And sound the loudest notes in heav'n above.
 Thus has Jehovah crown'd thy rip'ning years.
 How sov'reign, rich, and free His love appears.
 Blest house! blest parents! and blest children too!
 Sure you will join in praise so justly due.

TO THE BOARD OF CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS, LONDON.

HONOURED FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

The kindnesses formerly received at your hands as a body, and from the individuals which compose that body (of which a grateful remembrance is still alive in my mind), together with that love of union and Christian fellowship which the Spirit of the gospel dictates, and which, I trust, will ever form a prominent feature in my ministerial character, induce me *now* to intrude upon your attention. I cannot but feel very keenly that *coolness* and *distance* with which I have been treated since I had the honour of labouring in the vicinity of London; and am free to confess, it constantly mars the happiness I am enjoying among the people of my charge. I am utterly at a loss to conceive of any just reason why I am not cordially received by that body of Christian ministers by whom I was repeatedly recognised when labouring in the country, whom I still revere, and with whom I hope to spend eternal day. If there be any such reason, you would confer another favour by communicating it to me, either by word or by epistle; and I hereby pledge myself to receive and act upon such communication as directed in the volume of inspiration. If I have erred, either in doctrine or practice (which I am not conscious

of), it shall be immediately altered; and with regard to the plain *leadings of Providence* which brought me to Camberwell, I doubt not but I could satisfy all your minds, if I were allowed to state them. It really appears *hard*, that the only BODY OF DISSENTERS, by which I can be recognised, should stand aloof from me, when I only want their friendship, after having owned me, and helped me when I stood in need of *their* help. I will not intrude further on your attention, but conclude by soliciting that, if I am not worthy to associate with you, I may share in your addresses to the throne of grace. I remain, Gentlemen, with every sentiment of gratitude and respect,

Your fellow-labourer in the gospel,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Camberwell, April 11, 1820.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sawston, January, 1815.

I received your affectionate letter, and I felt much concerned about you on Sabbath last; and though I enjoyed much of the presence of the Lord, *Hoddesdon* was not out of my thoughts long at a time. I trust you had some spiritual food given by the hand of our heavenly Father, and received it with keen appetites; then the change of the *waiter* was not of much importance. Allow me to caution you, my dear friend, against dictating to God. I have seen much evil arise from this. Our God performs the part of a wise Father; He holds all our comforts in His own hand, and gives them to *us when, where, and by whom* He pleases; and we shall do well to submit cheerfully to His disposal, and wait patiently the bestowment of His favours, especially as we are assured from His *own word*, that He “will withhold no *good* thing from us.”

Suppose you and I were to go to visit a large family, where there were many children, and many servants employed; each child would, perhaps, have its favourite servant, from whom it would be most agreeable to receive the good things communicated from the father. But should the father see fit to employ that servant at a distance, and send a plate of savoury meat by the hand of another servant, would it not be ungratefully rude, on the part of the child, to refuse or disrelish it on that account? I must leave you to be your own interpreter, in the confidence that I shall share largely in your prayers, and with a determination, in the strength of the Lord, never to forget you at the throne of grace.

As we have now commenced another year,
O may new vigour mark our high career;
New flames of love be glowing in each breast—
New covenant blessings make us truly blest.

May *He*, with whom there's nothing old or new,
 Constantly deign to smile on me and you.
 May we, where'er our future lot is cast,
 Meet in the blest Jerusalem at last.
 May *He*, who by His Spirit gave us grace,
 Support and guide us through our Christian race.
 And may the love that doth our souls unite
 Increase, till perfected in realms of light.
 Thus prays the man whom you as father own,
 Bearing you on his heart before the throne;
 Nor will the God of heaven refuse his prayer,
 For we've a powerful Intercessor there.

Yours, in the bonds of the covenant,
 J. IRONS.

Camberwell, Feb. 10, 1828.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Why art thou cast down, O my friend, and why is thy soul disquieted? Hope thou in God; for thou shalt yet praise Him, who is the health of thy countenance, and thy God. Suffer not your mind to ruminate on the trials which surround you, seeing that thou canst not make one hair white or black; but think of His eternal covenant love, who was emphatically the "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." I grant that your voyage over the sea of life has been rather stormy; but the heavenly Pilot who hath conducted you thus far will not let you sink now. Your anchor cannot lose its hold amidst all the foaming billows to which you are exposed. It is "sure and stedfast," and "enters into *that* within the veil." Besides, the port is just in view, and the very waves which now toss you exceedingly, shall but waft you safely home. I, too, am tempest-tossed; but all is well. Come, join with me in singing,

"With Christ in the vessel,
 We'll smile at the storm."

Can you question those precious seasons of spiritual enjoyment which you realized in years past? Oh, do not yield to unbelief! But remember the many gracious manifestations you have enjoyed under the word, &c.; and then plead, as the Psalmist did, "Thou *hast* been my help: leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."

I have scribbled this while the bearer is waiting, and can only add my earnest prayer that the God of all grace may comfort and bless you.

Yours, &c.,
 J. IRONS:

Camberwell, July 25, 1828.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your kind letter should have received an earlier reply but for the deep anguish of spirit which has overwhelmed me for the last month. I find it, indeed, hard work to say to my Father, "Thy will be done;" and, although I have been favoured with miraculous support from above, yet the *vacant chair*, the *lonely bed-room*, the *cast-off clothes*, and a thousand other things, call up reflections too keen for *man*, and extort the bitter fact, "I'm left half dead." But I forbear. The waters are come into my soul, and my pen refuses to record more of the awful and affecting dispensation, which to the *dear departed* was indeed *gain*.*

Never, in the lapse of twenty years' ministry, have I known so much of the value and preciousness of gospel truths; those very truths which are everywhere spoken against. "God is faithful;" and this I have proved in the extraordinary communications of grace, which have not only raised my soul above the sad calamity which has come upon me, but also enables me to go forward in the work of the Lord with unabated fervour and success. My pulpit is my asylum, and there I find my gracious God "a very present help in trouble."

August 7.—Thus far, my dear friend, I had written a fortnight ago, but my sorrow was too great to permit me to proceed then. I will try to write a few more lines now, but must avoid the heart-searching subject. I know your readiness to condole with me, and to bear me upon your heart before the throne, which entitles you to be informed of that which will call forth the tribute of gratitude from your heart on my behalf. Such, then, is the infinite wisdom and faithfulness of our covenant God, that He has stood by me in His blessed work continually, and rendered my sorrow instrumental in the comfort of many of His redeemed family; and though His discipline has been as severe with me as it was with Ezekiel, yet His Israel has received great benefit thereby; so that I can say to them, as Paul did to the Corinthians, "Whether we be afflicted, or whether we be comforted, it is for your comfort and salvation." Therefore I endure all things for the *elect's sake*.

Now, my dear friend, can you furnish me with a pulpit for one evening, and a bed for one night? I hear you say, "Yes." Then I'll come, Providence permitting, on the 20th of the present month, as I am to preach at Margate the two preceding days. Give my love to your dear husband, and believe it is my earnest prayer that your happiness in union may be long continued; and yet I would say, *hold it as tenants at will*, that, when called to part, you may not be as rebellious as I have

been. Grace, mercy, and peace, rest upon you and your dear partner, from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am, in deep affliction, your affectionate Friend, Brother, and spiritual Father in our dear Lord Jesus, and in the bonds of His gospel,

JOSEPH IRONS,

[* This was written shortly after the death of the first Mrs. Irons.]

Camberwell, Jan. 18, 1831.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * We can, indeed, compare notes. I am no stranger, as you know, to "passing through deep waters;" but I have always found my covenant God as good as His word: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." The sympathizing heart of Jesus is as tenderly touched with the feelings of our infirmities as ever, and He never allows His redeemed to be cast into a fiery furnace without going with them. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were far happier men in the furnace, with the Son of God, than was king Nebuchadnezzar on his throne. And you know, my dear friend, that our poor fleshly natures need much discipline to mortify and keep them under, so that grace may reign and sin not have dominion. "The earth is the Lord's," and the Lord is ours, so that having Christ we possess all things. The barrel of meal may fail, but the ravens are on the wing with bread and flesh. The cruise of oil may be run out, but "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." God has dealt graciously with me; and, amidst many and sharp trials, He has daily loaded me with His benefits. Tell dear A—— to go on, still proclaiming covenant love, precious blood, and invincible grace; and God will be with him in the midst of all his discouragements.

I remain, in haste, your Father and Friend,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, March 17, 1832.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter of solemn tidings is just put into my hands, amidst my study for the Lord's day; and, circumstanced as you are, your dear husband being out, I cannot allow a single hour to pass without a word of condolence. And what shall I say? Go, my dear friend, where John went, and lean upon Jesu's breast; thou hast a right there, for He is thy Husband, and He is always at home. It is His delight to bear thy burdens, for He hath loved you with an everlasting love, and is *touched* with a feeling of your infirmities, and knows how to succour you in your deepest sorrows and sharpest trials; yea, He has given you His *oath* that He will be with you in six troubles, and in seven He will not forsake

you, *only lean upon Him*, put *all* your burden upon Him, throw yourself upon Him, and, like a fond Husband, He will encircle you with His arms, and give you the sweetest expression of His unchanging love.

Your dear mother is in "a better country;" and while I sympathize with you in the feelings of a child, yet, on her account, would urge you to rejoice that she has reached her heavenly home. Let me hear from or see you soon. With our united affection,

I remain, yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Camberwell, Nov. 14, 1832.

My aversion to letter-writing increases with my years. However, I cannot resist the inclination I feel to answer your letter. * * * *
Oh, that I had more grace to keep me from ever repining, or entertaining one hard thought of my covenant God; but I find a perpetual war between my *faith* and my *feelings*. The poor, fleshly, carnal mind quarrels with everything, and often charges God foolishly, fretting, resenting, and struggling, till it exhausts itself and increases its burden. Yet, when faith is in lively exercise, David's song is mine, "Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for all my salvation and all my desire." You will see, by turning to the passage, that I have omitted the italics (*this is*) which you are aware are not in the original, and I think weaken the passage, and obscure the true meaning of the text; for *without* those two words the sense is, that the everlasting covenant is ordered and established expressly for all my salvation and all my desire; not merely that *it is* all my salvation, but that my covenant God had my salvation expressly in view when He ordered it, and ordered all its features *for* the salvation of the whole election of grace. What amazing love is developed in the grand covenant scheme; whether I think of the covenant Head, or the covenant people, or the covenant fulness, or the covenant security, I am lost in wonder and admiration. The covenant Head was set up from everlasting in the eternal Sonship of His proper Deity, as the responsible Head and Husband of His Church; was given to Him, and betrothed by Him, in her pristine beauty and glory, before sin existed to mar and deform the object of His love. Yea, He entered into covenant for "all her salvation and all her desire;" so that when she fell, in common with the rest of Adam's posterity, His covenant engagement stood as the bond of security for *her* recovery, involving all the glory of His nature and perfections, in the great work of her redemption, and *all* her salvation. His covenant people stand related to Him from one eternity to another; so that no occurrences of this time-state can burst the tie of affection, or

change the covenant affinity. *My people* is His claim, whether they be in Egypt, or in Canaan, or in Babylon, nor can all the Arminian fornication in the world induce Him to abandon His spouse, or embrace the bond-woman; He will never write a bill of divorce for His Church, nor will He ever take the world to His embrace. Were but this glorious truth received and propagated, Arminianism, like an owl at noon, would creep, into some Pagan hovel, unable to bear the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The covenant fulness is that precious, inexhaustible stock of *free grace* of which you so emphatically speak in your kind letter. It did my soul good to find the Lord is keeping you in the good old way. I praise the Lord, that the very air of free grace, in which you were born, is still inhaled by you. It is the most salubrious and healthy air in all the immensity of God; and were the Church of God living always in it, she would not have to complain of the *free-will plague*, or of the *licentious fever*, or of the Pharisaic cholera morbus, which now spread pestilence and death throughout Zion's precincts. Blessed be God, that it is our privilege to live upon that *covenant fulness* which is in Christ Jesus, from whence our God will supply all our need. Nor is the *covenant security* less important or precious; as, if there were but the possibility of failure, then every privilege would be held on uncertain tenure, every promise would be doubtful, every joy would be chilled, Christian experience would dwindle into slavish fear, and God Himself would see His glory hanging in the cobwebs of uncertainty. But, glory be unto His precious name, this is not the case; all is infallibly *sure* in the covenant of grace. Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are the sworn covenanters for the salvation of the chosen family; every *purpose* is a fixed decree, every *promise* is yea and amen, every privilege is an entailed right, and the person of every believer is a precious jewel. Nor will our covenant God part with one for whom the blood of the covenant was shed; and that blood was shed for all who have felt its efficacy in cleansing the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. You will be glad to hear that the Lord is giving us proof of His power going forth with the word, so that it is made spirit and life to many. Grove Chapel still rings with *covenant love*, *precious blood*, and *invincible grace*.

I remain, your Friend and Father in Christ,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, March 20, 1834.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened to you. The favoured children

of God *generally* pass through floods and flames to their eternal inheritance; indeed, if it were not so, we could not know half the sweetness of the precious promise, "When thou passest through the waters," &c., &c. I, Joseph, am your brother in tribulation. Wave upon wave rolls over me, but the above promise keeps my head above water. My burdens feel heavy as I am getting toward old age; but the Lord will not lay more upon me than He will enable me to bear; and I desire to be still, for a disposition to murmur would be a more heavy trial to me than all the afflictive circumstances put together. May the Lord grant faith and patience. *Nature* is *nature*, and will vent itself; but *grace* is *grace*, and it shall triumph over nature. * * * *

Yours in Jesus,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I regret that I have been so long in replying to your last communication; but you know *how much my time is occupied*. Alas! my beloved Lord has more reason to complain of me than you have. How often is He loading me with His benefits, and receiving little else but neglect and murmurings. I am sure, if He did not love me more than any friend on earth, and if His love were not immutable, He would abandon me for ever. But, blessed be His dear name, I have His sweet promise that He will never leave or forsake me; and this cheers my heart, even in the most depressing moments of self-abasement, when most deeply conscious of my vileness. He is, indeed, a Friend that loveth at all times; and there are times in our experience, my dear friend, when we have nothing else to hang upon but His *unchangeable love*; and, indeed, I have found it most profitable, for then everything earthy sinks into its native nothingness, and He *only* is precious. The choicest creature comforts have so much alloy in them, that their real value is very small without Him; but when He is seen and enjoyed in them all, then the most common of our mercies have an *uncommon* sweetness in them. This made the Church of old exclaim, "My Beloved is to me as a cluster of camphor in the vineyards of En-gedi"—penetrating, preserving, and odoriferous; for when friends, food, or clothes, are camphorated with His precious name, and received as His gifts, the soul inhales spiritual delight in the enjoyment of them all. How little does the poor worldling imagine the sevenfold sweetness which the Christian tastes in his daily bread; and how blind are many to the kind hand of our covenant God, making all things to work together for our good, according to the *plan* drawn by infinite wisdom,

and perpetually executing, both in providence and grace, by almighty power and untiring goodness. You will be glad to hear that Jesus is still reigning gloriously in Grove Chapel. With kindest remembrances,

Ever your Father and Friend,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, May 13, 1837.

MY DEAR CHILD IN THE LORD,

You ask me to pray for you, that you may "revive as the corn, and grow as the vine." Well, I will endeavour so to pray for you; but I beg of you not to complain if the prayer be answered according to the simile which you have chosen. Now if you go into the corn-fields, you see the huge *roll* passing over the corn, which appears as if it would press it down, and destroy it; but afterward, the showers and the sun revive it. Thus have I often proved, that prior to revivals in my soul, the great Husbandman has caused huge sorrows to *roll* over my experience, pressing me down, and thereby strengthening my root-hold before the sun and rain have revived my sensible enjoyments; and I have lived to prove that the *roll*, and the *harrow*, too, are very useful in the culture of Christian experience; for without this process, the grubs and slugs of vile inbred corruption would destroy all fruitfulness. Yea, the richer the soil in which the good seed is sown, the more needful is this part of husbandry. The other part of your simile, "grow as the vine," intimates the fact of human weakness, and the *necessity* of Divine support; for the vine is one of the most crooked, ugly, and weak, of *all* trees in *itself*, and needs to be nailed to a wall, and often pruned, to bring forth much fruit. Nevertheless, when loaded with clusters of ripe fruit, I know not a more beautiful sight in nature. So the Christian is helpless and unsightly, indeed, *in himself*, and *to himself*; but, united to Christ, and supported by Him, being well pruned by afflictions, trials, and spiritual conflicts, then, like Joseph, "his branches run over the wall," and the precious fruits brought forth by the Sun abound to the glory of God.

Now, my dear friend, I do indeed pray that you may "revive as the corn, and grow as the vine," with as little *rolling* and *pruning* as the great Husbandman sees fit to use, and as much patience in waiting for the early and the latter rain as is provided for you in the covenant of grace, to bear up your mind through your wintry months. Our garden in Grove Chapel, I know you will be pleased to hear, still thrives; and I trust there are in it many plants of righteousness still bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God. Some of my choicest plants have been recently transplanted to Paradise, where

they want neither pruning nor rolling. I suppress my sigh of regret, because I expect to be transplanted there myself soon.

In Christian affection, your Friend and Father,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, Aug. 31, 1839.

MY DEAR CHILD IN THE LORD,

I write these few lines just to say, that we had a very pleasant passage from D—— to London Bridge, and reached our peaceful Shepherd's Tent, where we found all well. I went immediately into our "holy and beautiful house," where numbers were assembled for prayer and praise. I need scarcely say, they "received me gladly." * * * * What a *cementing* thing is Christian love! It is of heavenly origin; it links heaven and earth together; it is the neck of union between Jesus, the Head, and His Church, His body; it is the sinew of strength to Zion, and the life-blood of her sons and daughters. Oh! if there were more Christian love among the heaven-born family, what a domestic circle they would form! how cheering would all the apartments of the house appear! and how brightly would every countenance of the household shine! That cold, frigid thing called intellectual religion, would soon die, if Christians knew how to love one another with a pure heart fervently; for that Divine principle, which constitutes heaven, brings down so much of heaven to earth, that everything earthy dies before it, and becomes so offensive, that the heaven-born soul is glad to bury it out of his sight. Remember me to the children. I am not so much of the *sour old man*, but that I really love them, and pray God Almighty to give them His grace.

Yours, as ever,

J. IRONS.

Camberwell, March 27, 1840.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am ashamed to see your letter lie so long unanswered. You ask my opinion of the Millenarian controversy. Let it not divert your attention from vital godliness. I much fear that, in some instances, it has done this to Christians. It is our mercy, my dear friend, to have Christ reigning in our hearts, and to be brought to bow to His absolute sovereignty, both in grace and in providence, resting satisfied with all that He does *in us, for us, and by us*. This will afford sweet peace amidst all the wars and tumults which carnal-minded professors are raising about our ears, and all the conflicts which the depravity of our natures produce

within. What a mercy that we have not been left to follow cunningly-devised fables, but have been kept by Divine power in the good old way these many years. Oh! the blessedness of a religion which is all of God from first to last. My soul longs to be more secluded, and only to walk with God, until I shall walk with Him in white, being made like Him (Christ), and for ever seeing Him as He is. The views I sometimes have of Him now, by faith in the glory of His Godhead, the purity of His manhood, the adaptation of His offices, the perfection of His works, and, above all, His *responsibility for me*, so enamour my soul, that all other objects appear unworthy of a look or thought; and, like the spouse in the Canticles, I would charge all around "not to stir up nor awake my Love, till He please." Give my kindest Christian love to your dear husband, and tell him my prayer for him is, that he may ever have a large supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, to keep straight forward, preaching the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ with great success.

Yours, as ever,

J. IRONS.

March 23, 1841.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have been long looking for your "long letter soon." Knowing, as I do, what it is to be brought into deep waters, and having recently found them, like Ezekiel's, "*knee deep—loin deep—yea, a deep impassable*," I was led to preach last Sabbath from that precious verse in the 29th Psalm, "The Lord sitteth upon the flood," which I first explained with reference to the state of the Church of God; secondly, with reference to the experience of the people of God; and, thirdly, as testifying of the triumphs of the cause of God. The second head formed the chief part of the sermon. I noticed the floods of soul distress, of outward trial, of overwhelming temptations, and of ungodly men, and showed that the Lord sitteth upon them all, controlling every wave, and limiting every surge, &c., &c.

There is another thing in your *harbinger* of a letter, which I cannot help noticing, viz., your acquitting me of the charge of Arminianism. I thank you for that, as I would almost as soon be accounted a thief or a highway robber, as an Arminian; indeed, I count them almost synonymous—for Arminianism steals the sceptre of King Jesus to put into the impious hand of proud *Free-will*; and, on the highway of gospel ordinances, it robs many a traveller to glory of his comfort, his confidence, and his clothes. I know him, having been met by him frequently on the King's highway, where he has repeatedly presented his blunderbuss at my heart, loaded with if's, but's, and law terrors; and if you ask me how I have

escaped his hands, I reply, my gracious Lord has furnished me with a sharp two-edged sword, the very same which He used Himself when on earth. With this I have often vanquished this bold *highwayman*, though I cannot conceal the fact that he has often wounded me. I have again and again reported his base conduct to my Royal Master, and I cease not to warn every fellow-traveller against him. Often have I apprehended him, but he slips out of my hands, and hides himself in the thickets of carnal reason and Pharisaic pride, from whence he watches his opportunity to pounce upon unwary travellers unawares, and rob them. He often changes his name, in order to deceive; and, as occasion requires, he will call himself *Universal Redemption*, *Universal Charity*, *Moderate Calvinist*, and many other ambiguous names—but his real name is Popery. Well, his career will soon be at an end, for the King has condemned him to be burned in the last conflagration, and he shall never infest the celestial city; so that we have only to be aware of him for a little while, and then lose sight of him for ever. * * * *

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

May 24, 1842.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Out of much affliction, I now write you, as I know I shall thereby gain an interest in your prayers. * * * In the midst of all, we had a glorious day at the Grove. Look at the text (Ezek. xxxiv. 25), in which I found four things—1. The King's Charter (covenant of peace); 2. The exercise of His prerogative (over evil beasts); 3. The position of His kingdom (in the wilderness); 4. The tranquility promised (dwelling safely—sleeping in woods). There seemed to be power with the word, and I trust I got a little of the tranquility. My life is made up of *conflicts* and *conquests*, of *cares* and *comforts*, of crosses and crowns; so, after all, I have the balance kept tolerably even. Blessed be God, trials put our principles to the *test*; and I have often proved that the greatest exigencies have opened the door to the greatest deliverances. "In patience possess ye your soul."

I remain, my dear friend, in the bonds of Christian affection and sympathy,

Very faithfully yours in our covenant Head,

J. IRONS.

October 14, 1842.

MY DEAR CHILD IN THE LORD,

If you were not an *old friend*, &c., you would not have so many of my sermon plans; as it is, I send the following:—Jer. xlviii. 28—1. The

Church in an enemy's country (dwelling in Moab), wonderfully preserved, essentially distinct from the world. 2. The advice given to her—to escape the judgment coming on Moab—to separate from their society—to come and dwell in the Rock (Christ). 3. The nature given to her (the Dove)—affectionate and pure, such as is the child of God—expecting to remove (and therefore sitting at the hole's mouth, ready to escape. Now, my dear friend, if we are thus living upon the very verge of time, and in the experimental enjoyment of Christ, in the sides of the hole's mouth, waiting until some Hawk shall *drive* us out, or until the voice of our Beloved shall *call* us out, verily we may brave all that may seek to destroy our peace. Only let us keep to our principles, and carry them out in life, and then shall we know something of that blessed text, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." My dear other self unites in love to you *both*, praying that every new covenant blessing may rest upon you.

Yours in Christian affection,

J. IRONS.

June 24, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In reply to your anxious inquiries, I write to tell you I had obtained the prayed-for relief, from a very obstinate attack of gout in both my feet; but last week the attack was renewed, which made it difficult to climb the pulpit stairs yesterday; however, I did so, and preached twice in a sitting posture. I am this morning much relieved from pain, and hope to fulfil my engagement to preach at Woolwich this evening; indeed, I stand engaged to preach every day this week, except Saturday, and I hope to have strength to go through it.

I thank God, on your behalf, dear friend, for the merciful deliverance you have experienced—hope you will soon recover from the injury received. Mrs. Irons unites in love. You see she always makes me her SCRIBE, though she cannot make me a PHARISEE.

Yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

November 11, 1845.

MY DEAR CHILD,

Though I have but a few moments to write to you, yet, feeling anxious that you should possess "Priscilla," I send it by post. I assure you that you are not *forgotten by us*. May the covenant God of Israel—*our own God*—fulfil His own promise to you, "as thy day so shall thy

strength be." Confide in Him, commune with Him, and claim *all* that He has promised, as your own. We are going on as usual at Camberwell, with much cause for gratitude, and plenty of exercise for faith. What a mercy! mine is an unchanging God, an unchanging creed, an unchanging faith, and an unchanging portion.

I remain, in haste, yours affectionately, in covenant bonds,

J. IRONS.

January 28, 1846.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I was pleased to get a note from you, and should have been thankful if it had brought better news; however, I will praise the Lord that He will not suffer your faith to fail, though He may see fit to try it more and more. The one blessed fact, that you are in the hands of a covenant God, as His own property, is sufficient to prove that He will take care of you, both for time and eternity, and I trust you will always be enabled to run to this stronghold. I have for many months suffered much in my health, though not to be laid aside from labour; general debility has prostrated me between the services, but hitherto, I have always rallied just in time for the pulpit, and there the gracious Lord continues to make use of me. We opened the year with the addition of twelve new members, and more are pressing for fellowship, so that the promise which has been much upon my mind of late seems to be fulfilling, viz., "at evening tide it shall be light." I shall enclose you some *Goshen bread* in this, and I trust you will be refreshed and strengthened thereby, so as to hold on vigorously in your warfare; and may the Captain of our salvation be always sensibly present with you. The God of peace bless you. With Mrs. Irons' kind love.

Yours faithfully,

J. IRONS.

March 9, 1849.

MY DEAR CHILD IN THE LORD,

'Midst cares, labours, and anxieties, the thought of your trying position is always following me, and I drop this hurried line just to ask you how you are getting on? I know you are taught to cast your burden on the Lord, and have experienced His sustaining power, but that ought not to prevent your telling your *spiritual father* how you are exercised, that he may sympathize and pray for you. Do write soon. May our covenant God be always with you, that you may come out of this furnace without even the smell of fire upon you, and having lost nothing but bonds. Mrs. Irons unites in sympathy and affection.

Your faithful friend,

J. IRONS.

August 2, 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In reply to your kind note, I write to say, blessed be God that "no plague has come near our dwelling," except that of rheumatic gout, under which I suffer greatly; I use proper means to keep it out of my stomach, but it will attack me there sometimes, producing the most distressing pains, &c. Still, however, I keep to my beloved work, and in it have been favoured with great liberty and much success in my ministrations, and am still of the opinion which I expressed many years ago—that if I *could* go home before my work was done, my Master would send me back again to finish it—so don't be alarmed concerning me; for I know He will support me until the work He has appointed me to do is completed.

Yours,
J. IRONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 6, 1849.

We rejoice with you that the Lord has somewhat relieved your deep affliction. May He ever bless you and yours, both in spirituals and temporals. My health is, I think, improving, though my legs and feet are still very weak, so that I could not possibly get about without my horse and chaise. Our temple is still dignified with the King's presence, and many royal favours does He distribute among us, which I hope you will be able shortly to come and share. The Lord bless, preserve, and supply you, prays your

Constant friend,
J. IRONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 26, 1849.

I am truly thankful, on your behalf, that the Lord has mitigated your *deep* affliction, and I pray that He may fulfil all your desires, and supply all needful grace. As for me, I feel worn out, and so exhausted, that these few lines are a burden to write. I cannot comply with your kind invitation; the most perfect quietude is essential to my existence, and it is not likely that I shall leave my Tent this season. Now you are a little released, steal away, and come and see me at the Tent. You will see the arrangements for our next anniversary on the cover of the "GOSPEL MAGAZINE."

Yours, &c.,
J. IRONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 7, 1851.

I thank you for your invitation—but you can have no idea of what I suffer—the most agonizing pains are my lot, night and day, and I won-

der that my senses are preserved, and that my life holds out in such insupportable torture. I now seldom can preach, only on Sabbath mornings, and am drawn in my wheel chair for that. O how I am obliged to cry unto God, that faith and patience may hold out; for, to use Job's language, "I am weary of my life; even to day is my complaint bitter," &c. But I dread complaining more than suffering. My dear wife has been ill for three weeks. Well, "our light afflictions which are but for a moment," and the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." How precious are these words to my soul in my great affliction!

Grace and glory both are given;

I am on my way to heaven.

Yours, as ever,

J. IRONS.

June 4, 1851.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

When your letter came to hand I was fretting and almost despairing, but when I read your *Ezekiel's roll* I seemed to forget my sufferings, in sympathy for you. May the Lord give you Divine support, and bring you through this furnace with much soul profit. Truly, indeed, it is written, "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." What a mercy to be enabled to practice the last clause of the text—"trust in the Lord." I find nothing will do but falling back upon principle; then, being fully satisfied that all our sufferings are weighed, measured, labelled, and dated by a loving Father, I try to *pray* "Thy will be done." Write soon, and ever believe me,

Yours faithfully,

J. IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, March 29, 1845.

MY DEAR BROTHER IN OUR MOST GLORIOUS CHRIST,

We reached our habitation in peace and safety, and found all things comfortable, and my dear people assembled at seven o'clock, not a little glad to receive me, and to hear my narrative of a "*week's work*;" and they then prayed earnestly for their *brethren* and *sisters* at BEDWORTH; and as our God is accustomed to hear prayer, I expect that you will get the answer in showers of spiritual blessings. The brethren with you, will, I know, use their interest at the court of heaven for us. Tell them, from me, that the blessings of Easter week will certainly make the father of lies very angry, and they may expect his infernal malice put forth in some shape, but if they cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and to one another with pure hearts fervently, they will be more than

a match for all his devices, and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly. With earnest desire for Zion's prosperity with you, and every blessing to rest upon you and your family, that grace, mercy, and peace may continue with you all,

I remain, my dear Brother, yours faithfully, in Christ Jesus,

JOSEPH IRONS.

Bedworth, April 13, 1846, Monday Evening.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The watchful care and sure protection of our covenant God, has placed us by the fire-side of our friends in this village; and I write a line to say, as the Psalmist did, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." All is tip-toe expectation here, and we mean to set the battle in array to-morrow, and I hope to give you an account of the *killed* and *wounded* when I return; * for if the arrows are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, the people must fall under them. Kindest love to yourself and family, in which Mrs. Irons unites, and

I remain, in haste, your affectionate Pastor,

JOSEPH IRONS.

[* This visit was signally owned of God in the conversion of sinners, and the comforting of many of His dear saints in that part of the country.]

September 30, 1848.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I seize a moment amidst my life of bustle, to acknowledge the reception of yours, and to rejoice with you in the tokens of Divine love of which you write. May He who filled the temple of Solomon, always dwell in "Ezra," and there manifest His glory, to the exclusion of human merits, free will, and all the rest of the Popish heresies which degrade many of the so-called Protestant places of worship in the day in which we live. As for me, I am like an old soldier, wounded, weather-beaten, and worn out; but I keep on rattling my armour and brandishing my sword, and sometimes aim a heavy blow at that Goliath, "*Free-will*," and if his neck had not been "an iron sinew," I think I should have cut his head off long ago; for he is a deadly foe to my Lord, to His truth, and to His people. Present my Christian love to your dear pastor. May the Lord give him strength and courage for his work, and great success in it. "Encourage him" (Deut. i. 38). For if ever the standard-bearer faints, the whole army is dismayed (Is. x. 18).

Believe me, your Friend and Brother for the Gospel sake,

JOSEPH IRONS.

W. M——, Esq.

Camberwell, March 17, 1852.

DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD,

I am so reduced and enfeebled by long protracted illness and increasing sufferings, that I can scarcely lift my pen; but I must make an effort to thank you for your kind and encouraging epistle.

I thank God that He has condescended to make some use of me; but I feel that my day's work is done, and I am only waiting for my wages, ALL OF GRACE. I know that the truths sent forth in "GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT" will live and work when I am gone home. *I should like, if it be the will of God, to be able to complete the Fourth Volume; but I am sinking every day, and though I do not attempt to preach but once a-week (on the Lord's Day morning), every discourse appears to me it will be the last.* I cannot write more, except to subscribe myself,

Your very affectionate Brother in Christ,

JOSEPH IRONS.

The above was written a few days before he delivered his last sermon, and he only wrote one more letter after this. It fully describes his feelings at that period, and his earnest desire for the spread of the truths contained in the volumes of "Grove Chapel Pulpit," after he was taken home to glory. May his prayer be answered!

For the last five or six years, Mr. Irons gave ample proof of growing weakness, and of the great pain of body he was called to endure, which was far beyond the conception of any, excepting those who daily visited him. However debilitated he might appear in public, it is certain that it was not a fair specimen of his infirmities; for every nerve was strained for the service of God—the exalting of a precious Christ—entirely regardless of his own ease and comfort. Thus he continued to preach while he could stand; and when his limbs refused to support his frame, he sat to preach; and for a considerable period he delivered his discourses to his people in this position. It was quite necessary, to the forming a correct opinion concerning his affliction, to have visited him before he left his parlour (or bed,) for the pulpit; and then, again, when he returned. His preaching, of late, has cost him much. The fondest friend he had, could not deter him from public services:

if it were possible for him to crawl out for that purpose. For years bygone he expressed a desire (if the Lord would,) that he might be taken home to eternal rest while he was preaching. He has often said, "Oh! how much I should like it, if the Lord saw fit, that while I was lifting up a precious Christ in the pulpit, telling of His glories, His finished work, and Divine perfections, pointing to His cross, and extolling His name, that He would deign to *lift me up* to endless day, to see His lovely face, without a veil between; for I have spent the principal part of my life in the pulpit (or preparing for it); therefore I should like it to be the *parting post*; but would not dare to dictate to my Divine Master as to the time or manner of my removal to eternal rest." A dear friend of *his*—the Rev. Isaac Saunders—(who was also converted under the ministry of Mr. Gunn), died while preaching at St. Ann's, Blackfriars, in the act of repeating his text, during his discourse, "Complete in Him." And Mr. Irons appeared to envy him in *this particular*. But this was not the Lord's will concerning him. Although he was only allowed to remain silent *one* Sabbath after delivering his last discourse, he was so fond of his pulpit, that he could not tolerate the thought of vacating it, until the lease of life had expired. Having given up the Crescent lecture, he discontinued all his anniversary sermons (which were so numerous), with all other extra engagements; feeling that his dear people had the greatest claim on him during the remainder of his days. He was a martyr to the gout. The agonies that he endured were sometimes so great, that it was truly painful to witness his sufferings. It almost deprived him of his reason, during the extremity of the pain. On one occasion, about twelve months before his decease, he wrote the following verses, dated April 26, 1851, and carried them about with him in his pocket-book, until the time of his departure, adding, that *no language* could *fully* describe the acute pangs it produced—the climax of all maladies:

A MEMOIR OF

THE GOUT.

Most agonizing torture—pangs,
The tearing of some fiendish fangs,
Convulsing nature to and fro—
The climax of all human woe.

As when some crab, or pois'nous asp,
Fixes on ankle-joints his grasp,
And, gnawing through the bone and skin,
Draws out the marrow from within.

Comfort is plunder'd by this thief;
Patience, worn out, gives up to grief;
The intellect is under clog;
The victim lies—a helpless log.

All maladies, combined in one,
No remedy by man is known;
O Lord, my God, just say, "Be whole,"
I'll bless thee from my inmost soul.

J. IRONS.

Our dear departed friend, a short time before he took his flight to glory, attempted to write out the outline of a sermon which he had recently delivered at Grove Chapel. From some cause, the reporter was not present on that occasion; but, through great bodily affliction, he could not proceed further than the exordium. It is entitled,

ABSOLUTION.

"Through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."—Acts x. 43.

ONE of the most prominent beauties of the gospel of Christ is its simplicity, of which the language of this verse is a fair specimen; and we have many such in the New Testament, as well as in the Old. The prophet Isaiah was commissioned to declare, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." There is simplicity which cannot be misunderstood—salvation in the Lord exclusively—salvation for *all Israel*, the covenant people of God—salvation infallibly certain, "*shall be saved*"—salvation durable, "everlasting salvation." Our beloved brother Paul gloried that not only his preaching but his conver-

sation also was "in simplicity and godly sincerity." Hence in his epistle to the Romans, he gives that fine epitome of the gospel, "that is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This is just in keeping with our text, "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." We want none of the sophistry of the old schoolmen, who seem to have exhausted all their stores of mind and literature, to make that mysterious which God has made plain and simple; so much so, that "the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." We need not waste our time nor puzzle our brains with the ambiguous and self-contradictory harangues of the *fathers*, the councils, or the dogmas of the Popes and their swarms of Jesuits. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 8, 9). And, beloved, we need no more than the teaching of the Holy Ghost, with His own written and preached word, to "make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The subject before us is of vast importance in the day in which we live, when priestly arrogance has arisen to such a height as to disgust any real Christian, and to extort the sneer of contempt from the Infidel, while it insults the priestly office of Christ by assuming His sole prerogative to *forgive sins*. This priestcraft is the bane of real Christianity, the curse of the earth, and the master-piece of Satan's inventions. The wonder is how men of intellect and education can be so duped as to prostrate body, mind, and property to such gross deception, or support such gross imposture. The word of God only explains this mystery, informing us, that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." This alone can account for the fact, that men and women, of keen intellect in natural things, and of quick-sighted discernment in matters of commerce and business, should forget their rationality, abandon nature's intellect, and to be so inebriated with superstition, as to suppose that one poor sinner can forgive another his offences *against God*, when, in many cases, the pretender to the power of absolution, is more vile than his dupe. Again, we must refer to the language of inspiration to solve this mystery, and to account for this prodigy of ignorance. In the second Epistle to the Thessalonians we read, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie;" for what cause? just "because they received not

the love of the truth," but preferred the Satanic signs and lying wonders of the man of sin, the son of perdition (see 2 Thess. ii.). Now, of all the awful delusions with which God has permitted the earth to be infested, priestcraft is the darkest, most deceiveable, and devilish, when assumed and exercised under the name of Christianity, because it is under that sacred name that the *cheat* is concealed. A Pagan priest, or a Jesuit priest, we can understand, because they openly reject Christ, but the man that assumes the office of priest under the Christian name, puts on a disguise, has denied the faith, and is worse than an Infidel. Think me not severe; it is high time that the truth should be told out fully, and without reserve; and as my testimony is now drawing to a close, I must have a clear conscience in the sight of God, by attesting, that priestly pretensions to the power of absolution is the very worst of blasphemy, because the most deceptive. Nevertheless, the scriptural doctrine of the remission of sins is of high importance, and we will now proceed to examine and explain it, as set forth in our text, and as the Lord shall enable us, in the following order:—The CRITERION by which a pardoned sinner is known—"Whosoever believeth in Him;" secondly, the ABSOLUTION to be received by such; thirdly, the NAME to be pleaded in obtaining it—"Through His name," and His name only. This subject, beloved, has weighed heavily upon my mind, like "the burden of the word of the Lord," because of the awful perversions, and, above all, the doctrine of absolution, or remission of sins. Baal's priests have made it a matter of merchandize, and "by this craft they have their wealth," while millions of souls are deceived by them to their eternal ruin, and multitudes reject the doctrine so abused, as if it were no part of the gospel of Christ; whereas the fact is, that without the remission of sins there can be no salvation, and without receiving that remission by faith there can be no present happiness, though the salvation may be secure in the hand of the Mediator. We shall therefore endeavour to set this subject in a scriptural light, as clearly as possible, that the guilt-burdened soul may receive comfort therefrom, and the nefarious pretenders to a power which no man possesses, may be exposed and execrated. Our first point for consideration from the text is, the criterion by which a pardoned sinner is known—"Whosoever believeth in Him." Now what is it to believe in Jesus? I think three things connected together will give us a just idea of believing; I shall therefore name them, acknowledging all that is revealed of Him—building all our hopes upon Him, and satisfied with Him, so as to appropriate all we find in Him. Let us descant upon these for a few minutes. First, to acknowledge all that is revealed in the written word of inspiration concerning Christ, a believing with the heart,

giving it a hearty and cordial reception, as in the sight of God. We must be neither *Socinians*, *Arians*, nor *Arminians*, these we class together as unbelievers; for the infallible word of God says, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God dwelleth in Him, and he in God." Here believers confess Him as Paul did, or rather the Holy Ghost by Paul, "Who being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person;" and again, "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Now, whoever refuses or neglects to give the same honour to the Son which he professes to offer to the Father, is an unbeliever, and the Father will receive no homage or worship from such.

The great debility and pain which Mr. Irons suffered at this time quite prevented him from proceeding any further in writing out the discourse, which *he* exceedingly regretted—he stated, that when he had preached it he felt much disappointed, that it had not been taken down by the regular reporter, and feeling very anxious that the public should possess it, if possible, with the rest of his *printed sermons*, he had strained a point to write it out, while the subject was fresh upon his mind, but it was *too much* for him to accomplish. The sub-divisions of the discourse is all that was found written, in addition to the exordium of the sermon, we must therefore abruptly close where he laid down his pen. There was certainly a great deal of originality belonging to him, by some called peculiarity, in the preparing of his discourses. He never accustomed himself to write more than the heads of each discourse, which were few, and very plain—he never carried notes into the pulpit *on any occasion*, nor did he peruse any author or commentator, *however great and good*, until he had made the whole of his arrangements for the delivery of his discourse—trusting in the Lord for divine assistance—and having so done he would compare notes, and carefully read what they had written on the subject. He spent much of his time in his study, either employing his pen for God, or wrestling with Him in prayer, for a blessing

to attend his sacred labours: in a word, *he was a man of prayer*, constantly seeking divine direction, and daily protection from the Lord; he valued his study as much as any man, for *there* he realized the Lord's presence, and obtained Divine help in preparing for the pulpit—calling it his “little consecrated corner;” he considered it, and the pulpit, the dearest spots he had on earth. The heads of his sermons generally formed an *acrostic*; and this plan he was so accustomed to, that he could adopt it with the greatest ease and freedom that can be imagined—he often said that it assisted him in the delivery—and his hearers frequently said that they could remember the outline without any difficulty, on account of the acrostic; the divisions were also short and striking. A few shall be given by way of illustration, out of the thousands he has left in his study, in the greatest order—being all dated, from his first entering into Camberwell to the close of his labours—for he was the very *acme* of order, in his pulpit, parlour, person, and proceedings, both in public and private.

ACTS x. 43.

“Through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.”

I.—C riterion, by which a pardoned sinner is known.

A cknowledging all that is revealed of Christ.

B uilding exclusively upon Him, and

S atisfied with Him, so as to appropriate Him.

II.—A bsolution to be received by such—first, the

O fficial priesthood of Christ; then

L ove Divine, revealing it to the heart.

V essels of mercy comforted; this leads to the

E xalting of Christ, and elevating the soul.

III.—N ame to be pleaded in obtaining it; the

U nchangeable advocate on high; and the

S ufficiency of merit substituted.

“Can absolve us.”

HEADS OF HIS LAST DISCOURSE (1 Tim. i. 15).

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

I.—Sinner's case described.

A dam's fall—sin entering into the world.
 P ractical rebellion of all visible.
 P harisaic pride of fallen man.
 R ejection of truth, as revealed in the word.
 O vercome only by sovereign grace.

II.—O fficial errand of Christ, to save sinners.

P ower belonging to Him—*able to save*.
 R esponsibility rested upon Him.
 I nterest that He takes in His Church.
 A tonement made was acceptable to God.
 T ransgressors pardoned—even the chief of sinners.
 E mmanuel exalted—He must have all the praise.

"So appropriate."

REVELATIONS i. 18.

"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and death."

I.—F act proclaimed—"I am He that liveth"—first, the

T estifying of Christ's resurrection.
 H olding forth the completeness of His work, and
 E xulting in His mediatorial exaltation.

II.—O fficial importance of it; the

C hurch's perfect security depends on it; it is the
 H ope of the awakened sinner; and the
 U nfoldings of gospel mysteries.

III.—R ight use to be made of this proclamation; it is

R eiterated in our ministry; it
 C onstitutes our plea before the throne; it
 H onours Christ, and encourages us.

"For the Church."

LUKE xx. 38.

"For He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him."

- I.—Godless race—the dead—they are the
 O ffspring of rebellious parents,
 U nder the curse of a broken law; and
 R eally incapable of performing living acts.
- II.—O rthodox Church—the living family—they are
 P artakers of life divine, life eternal,
 O ne with the living Head—Christ Jesus, and
 R aised from the dead by the Holy Ghost.
- III.—D ivine portion; He is their God—observe the
 T rinity of persons, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, the
 I nfinite perfections pledged; then the
 O mnipotent power employed on their behalf, and the
 N ever-failing supplies for all the living Church.
- "God our portion."*

For a considerable period he was enabled to perform the services at his own chapel, with occasional help for the Tuesday evening lecture. He had often warned his people, by telling them "that the time of his departure was at hand"—that they must hold him with a loose hand, for *his days were numbered*, and he could not remain with them much longer, as he felt his natural powers fast giving way. But few out of the great number that attended his ministry supposed him to be *as bad* as he really was, from the fact of his venturing so frequently into his pulpit; but many had reason to change their opinions on this point. In *July last*, the time of his anniversary, as usual he was announced to preach in the morning, as he always took that part of the day. The chapel was filled at the appointed hour; but such was the pain and weakness of Mr. Irons, that he requested the *writer* to open the service for him (at this period he had not left his bed). Nothing short of necessity could have compelled him to have adopted this plan; for it was a fixed rule with him, wherever he preached at home or abroad, to take the introductory part himself, saying, "that often he got access to the

throne, enjoyed fellowship with God ; and this prepared his mind for declaring God's truth to the people." So firm was he on this point, that he would not allow his fondest friend to officiate, if it were possible to dispense with his help. Therefore his people were fully aware of his state when they saw another minister in the pulpit (*especially on that occasion*), and many feared, that they should be deprived the privilege of hearing him preach. After the introductory part was concluded, the OLD VETERAN for God and truth was conducted from his bed to his pulpit, too feeble to walk without assistance. With the greatest difficulty he ascended, giving proof that he was (what he had often said to his people,) "*a perfect wreck*," and, when seated, took for his text, 2 Tim. ii. 19—"Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: the Lord knoweth them that are His ; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." Having read his text in a low voice, before commencing his sermon and opening up the grand truths contained therein, he briefly stated, to the Church and congregation present, as follows :—"Dearly beloved, I have dragged this poor sinking body from my bed with great difficulty, and in agonizing pain ; to meet you on our THIRTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY, to praise the Lord for His goodness vouchsafed to us within this place—these hallowed walls. Further, I took for granted it would be the last time. I thought, therefore, if I could but speak for a quarter of an hour, it would be better for me to do so, than to wholly disappoint you. Well, dear friends, you must bear with my *my many infirmities*. Now no more about suffering self. I will endeavour, for a few minutes, to say something about the text, as the Lord shall enable me."

It was truly painful to witness his suffering while he remained in the pulpit, which was only for a very limited period ; and when he closed his discourse, he was conducted to his house, and shortly after to his bed. As he passed through the chapel-yard, all—or certainly

most of—the friends who saw him, considered that he was a dying man, and said that he had preached his last sermon. On this point they were mistaken; but certainly it was his *last anniversary sermon*. He felt persuaded his work was nearly done; and the same day, requested, as a favour, of his friend and brother, the Rev. R. Luckin, of Clerkenwell, that he would preach his funeral sermon. He told him that he knew he could not last much longer; if called to endure such great pain of body, *sink he must*, for nature must give way to the malady. But the Lord saw fit to *partially* restore him, so that he could, with great effort, reach his pulpit—to him a delightful spot; but it was quite evident, from the time of his last anniversary, that he preached like a man on the borders of the celestial world. In every sermon, however short, he would attempt “*to tell all out*,” feeling that it was more than probable that he should never more open his mouth for God in public. But the set time had not yet fully come; for there is “a time to die.” By the help of God, the kindness of friends, and the unceasing affection of his dear devoted wife, endeavouring to keep his mind as tranquil as possible, he was enabled to pursue his course, although with great difficulty, until the March following, when he gave full proof that he was rapidly sinking. I remember him taking me by the hand, early in that month, as he was reclining on his couch, saying, “I am fully persuaded that I am a dying man; yet how few appear to believe it.” My visits (at his request,) became more frequent from that time, although to me exceedingly painful. I felt it was the duty of a *fond child* to an *affectionate father*. His friends have often observed that he never *thoroughly rallied* after his last anniversary day. About this period he had much to distress his mind and disturb his peace. This added to his bodily afflictions, and caused his disease to make rapid inroads on his constitution; which was very conspicuous to those who frequently visited him; for it was necessary to see him in the parlour as well as the pulpit, to form a correct

opinion concerning his state. His nervous system was so shaken, that any additional trouble produced great mental depression; for he was a man of keen feeling. Whenever opportunity offered to visit him, I embraced it, but especially of a Saturday evening, knowing that he had, in addition to the intense suffering produced by disease, all the anxiety and care of preparing for the pulpit on the coming day; and a few cheering words have often proved beneficial to him, generally leaving him more comfortable and cheerful than I found him. At this period he was too weak to conduct family worship himself, and used to express his gratitude for assistance rendered at the domestic altar by his friends.

On the evening of Saturday, March 20, 1852, calling, as usual, I found him very ill indeed. I had never seen him so prostrate before; racked with pain, yet calm and serene in his mind. After he had asked a few questions of a *private nature*, he requested me to sit close by his side, and taking me by the hand, said, "My dear brother, I am looking forward to the morrow with deep anxiety; I have attempted to study a text *in the position you now see me*, and have been earnestly wrestling with the Lord to give me ease from the excruciating pain that I have been in the whole of the day, and enable me to deliver His word to the dear people of my charge (*he paused*, and then added) **FOR THE LAST TIME.**" I said, "My dear friend, do not say that; perhaps the Lord has more work for you to do in His vineyard, and will raise you up again for further usefulness. You will feel better after a night's rest. You have often been brought low, but always found, that as your day so has your strength been. The Lord has said, 'My grace is sufficient *for thee*.'" He replied, with all the energy he could master, "I feel fully persuaded that it will be my **LAST SERMON.**" After talking with him, and endeavouring to comfort his mind, speaking of the fulness and preciousness of Christ, "Yes," said he, "He is precious—the altogether lovely; I have had proof of this." At his request, I then closed up the week at the family altar, and pleaded with the Lord in

his behalf. He thanked me for my kindness to him during his long illness, and begged of me to visit him again shortly; after which I retired, to allow him to proceed to his bed. The Lord blessedly heard prayer, and on the morrow gave him just strength enough to reach his beloved pulpit, to him a hallowed spot. March 21st, he was conveyed from his bed to his chapel in a sinking state, and from 1 Tim. i. 15, delivered his farewell discourse—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." This was his last text, and from it he preached his farewell discourse, which is published in No. 199 of "*Grove Chapel Pulpit*;" and how beautifully does it correspond with the text he first opened his commission in Camberwell with, "I am Alpha and Omega," &c. Yes, Christ was all to him. He was constantly glorifying Christ, lifting Him up on the pole of the gospel; and if any into whose hands these few lines may fall, should call this statement in question, only let such turn to the *hundreds of his printed sermons*, then, surely, all their pre-conceived notions must fall to the ground, and their prejudice yield to solemn facts. His first sermon was full of Christ. This has been demonstrated both by *saint and sinner* who listened to it when he first entered into Camberwell; and so was his last. During the period of more than thirty years, he firmly adhered to the principles he first set out with—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"—Christ the substance of the gospel.

On one occasion, after he had been preaching at the Crescent, and was in the act of going home, some person, *a stranger to him*, said, with a loud voice, "Go on, thou glorifier of the Son of God"—doubtless, alluding to his constant practice of exalting and extolling a precious Christ. And this he continued to do to the very last, lifting up Christ as the covenant Head of His Church. Oh, how his soul was pained, when compelled to hear of some who had once been bold and faithful in the declaration of Divine truth, "Coming down"—to run with the

multitude, for the sake of gaining popularity! He would reply, "I am an *iron pillar*, and thank God, that I cannot stoop. By 'His grace, I am what I am.' Hitherto He has kept me faithful, or I had gone with them long since, and God keeping me, I will never give up one point of Bible truth to please men. I can say with Paul, 'Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after men. For I neither received of men, neither was I *taught it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.' I cannot *trim to the times*; the *iron* will not bend, and God has mercifully kept it from rusting."

Shortly after he had delivered his last discourse, he was wholly confined to his bed. His pains were intense; so much so, that it was feared by some of his friends that he could not retain his senses; but, blessed be God, their fears were never realized. During the whole of his affliction, his reasoning faculties remained in force, until a few days before his departure, when the stupor took place. He often took the opportunity of telling me, and his friends who visited him, that he did not wish to alter a sentence that he had advanced, either from pulpit or press; adding, "It may be said by some, after I have gone to glory, '*Joseph Irons recanted before he died.*' Tell them it was not so. From my dying pillow I declare, that I have no wish to recall or alter any of those grand fundamental truths that I have so long, and so successfully proclaimed. Bless the Lord, they will do to live and die by. I have lived by them for many years, and proved their preciousness; and now I feel fully persuaded that I am a dying man, and still they are precious to my soul. Oh, the importance of a vital religion—Christ in the soul, and the soul in Christ! 'My heart is fixed, O God, trusting in thee.' I am reclining on the bosom of Deity, resting on the finished work of a precious Christ, who hath loved *me*, and given Himself for *me*. Divine faithfulness is my staff and stay. My dear brother, what could I do without it *now*?"

Shortly after this, while visiting him, again he said, with great emphasis, "What a resting-place, dear brother, for a poor worn-out soldier! I am like John, leaning on the bosom of Jesus. My pains are great, indeed; but Christ is precious. May I never be allowed to murmur or repine. I am going home. Oh, for grace and patience to wait until He shall come Himself, and take me to Himself, to spend eternity with Him I love!"

On another occasion, he said he had been earnestly pleading with the Lord, that after he was taken home to endless day, to possess the glory which was prepared for him by a precious Christ, "that hallowed spot (*pointing to Grove Chapel*, the back of which was just facing the window of his dying chamber) MIGHT NEVER BE DESECRATED WITH ANOTHER GOSPEL;" and he raised himself up in his bed as the expression escaped his lips. He felt much for the future prosperity of that place, where, for so many years, he had been the honoured pastor. It is only an act of justice to state, that he knew what strong conflict and soul-darkness meant. During the former part of his illness, he had to grapple with the great enemy of souls; nor is this to be wondered at, when we take into consideration the great success that had attended his ministry for forty-four years—continually exalting Christ, feeding precious souls, and made so useful in plucking hundreds from Satan's grasp, that *he* should hurl his fiery darts at him at the last. Yet it is our mercy to know that he held fast his confidence unto the end; for in his darkest moments he was never permitted to doubt his interest in Christ, or call in question His relationship; but earnestly exclaimed, "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation." Some have said, "Oh! Joseph Irons, who was so bold all his life, had doubts and fears in his last moments." This is *untrue*; such was not the case. Our dear friend and brother was a stranger to doubts and fears concerning his safety for many years that are past—certainly for forty, at least. It is true that soul darkness endured for a night; "but joy came in the morning." Some weeks before his depar-

ture to glory, he enjoyed his Father's smiles, and had a strong confidence—a holy joy—a bold assurance, and sweet communion with God; and could exclaim, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." All the grand and glorious truths that he brought before the people from time to time, he was made to taste and handle; and having been brought to experience them for himself, he could and did open up to the flock all the various trials, troubles, and temptations, that attend the pathway of the pilgrim to Paradise; for he was truly an experimental preacher. Beyond a doubt, the intense pain of body that he was called to endure tended much to waste his animal spirits, and produce frequent depression; added to which, the *hard sayings* and the *hard doings* of some men vexed his holy soul. In health he was a happy, cheerful Christian—an ornament to his profession. For years he looked and longed for home, and often said to his friends, "I should like *no losing of time*; but, if the Lord should not grant me my desire in this respect, to drop in my pulpit, I do most earnestly hope that I may not be laid aside for *any* length of time." *Surely his prayer was very graciously answered*; for he was only silent for *one* Sabbath. From this period he grew rapidly weaker; but his mind was blessedly stayed on the Lord. He felt that he was sinking fast. He said that he knew he was a dying man, and he used frequently to speak of his departure with the greatest composure, stating, that he had preached his *last sermon*, that he had done with pulpit labours, and was longing for his crown: adding, "How I will praise Him when I see Him as He is, and get free from this poor sinful, suffering body! I can do little more than sigh here; but there I will sing aloud to Him that has loved me, and washed me from my sins in His own blood, and made me a king and a priest unto God. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

As far as the pains of the body would allow, he delighted to converse with friends of the preciousness of Christ, the faithfulness of Israel's covenant God, of His

long-suffering and forbearance, and of the many mercies he was in the receipt of, how much he had to be thankful for; and would attempt to rehearse and review the Lord's goodness to him for so many years in this wilderness; and said, "What are my pains, my sufferings, when compared with those of my precious Christ? What did He endure for me? Amidst my pains, I am surrounded with kind friends, and have all that my poor sinful, suffering body is capable of receiving; shut out from my foes, and attended by my dearest friends. But Jesus endured more than I can explain. All His friends forsook Him, and His foes were let loose upon Him, until, in His agony, He cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' *But I am not forsaken by my God*; and when I get a sight of a bleeding Christ now, I seem to forget my pains. Bad as they are, they are not worth naming, when compared with His. Oh, that I could love Him more, and live more to His honour! I know that I shall shortly see Him as He is, and go no more out for ever. Oh, my Lord, thou knowest that I love thee! Grant me more grace, that I may never repine, but patiently submit to thy Divine discipline, and know that love, paternal love, is mixed with all. My God is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind; and when I get home to glory, I shall be more than compensated for all the suffering I here endure in the taking down of this poor sinful tabernacle. I sometimes fear that I shall tire out my earthly friends; but Jesus is a Friend that loveth at all times—one that sticketh closer than a brother—I cannot tire Him. How many mercies have I to be thankful for! Bless the Lord, *it is all mercy.*"

On Saturday, March 27, I visited him early in the evening. At that time there were none present except his dear wife. I had a long conversation with him respecting the state of his mind. He said, "All is right, my dear brother; I am happy, happy in Christ. *I feel that underneath are the everlasting arms.* Yes, all is well. Precious Jesus! how I love Him—how I long to see Him as He is;" and while he held me by the

hand said, "Who would have thought, when I first entered into Camberwell, some thirty-three years ago, like a lion, caring for no man, and I believe but few men cared for me, the honoured servant of my Lord and Master, although not honoured much by men; I then neither courted their smiles nor feared their frowns, but *now* I am so completely prostrate that I am a perfect wreck, unable to put my hand to my head, or render myself the least assistance. *See what I have now come to.*" I spoke to him of his great and long usefulness in the Church of God—how many years he had been spared to blow the trumpet of the gospel, and of the great success that had attended his labours. He said, "Yes, all that is true, and calls loudly for gratitude to my unchangeable God, 'for His mercy endureth for ever.'" I knew that I dare not place the crown of creature merit on the head of Joseph Irons; he would have cast it to the ground, exclaiming, "Give God the glory, for I will have none of it." He added, "I am what I am by the grace of God. I have, it is true, worked hard in my time; surely they cannot say that I have *rusted out*. Mine has been a very blessed day, but it is nearly ended. Oh! the mercies that I have received; especially since I came to Camberwell. My brother, what an unspeakable mercy it is, that Divine grace has kept me faithful so long, and enabled me *to tell all out*." I said, "You are only waiting for your crown; a little longer, and then shall the coronation-day arrive." He said, "How blessed! 'a crown of righteousness, that fadeth not away'—'eternal glory.'" Being somewhat exhausted from the effort he had made, at the request of his dearest earthly friend he partook of some wine-and-water, and appeared a little refreshed. I offered to withdraw, and he looked earnestly at me and said, "*Don't go yet, I have something more to say to you*; but I am so weak, you must give me a little time, for I cannot talk now as fast as I used when you *first* knew me;" and smiled when he spoke. "I have no desire to live another day on earth. I long to be gone. Yet if my dear Lord and Master

has anything more for me to do or say, I am willing to live as long as He pleases. I have no wish to go home before my work is quite completed; and I think it is now finished, and candidly confess, if it were left to my choice, 'I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.' I know there is laid up for *me* a crown of righteousness; and feel fully assured, with Paul, 'to me to live is Christ, *to die is gain.*' I long for my crown—I expect my reward—*all, all of grace.*" Then, pointing across the room, in the direction of the Chapel, while he held my hand, he summoned up all his fading powers to give effect to his expression, and with unlooked-for energy, he said, "Ah! to-morrow is the Sabbath; you will then make those walls ring with the joyful sound of salvation. *Do tell it all out—keep nothing back*—endeavour to feed the living Church of God with pure truth, *but do not spare the hypocrites.* I have been praying this day that the Lord would abundantly bless you, and that your labours may be crowned with success, especially on the morrow. May the Lord hear and answer my poor breathings on your behalf, for it is written, 'After the fathers shall come up the children.' Do not be ashamed of the grand and glorious doctrines that I have so long and boldly proclaimed. It is a mercy, my brother, to be made faithful, and kept honest in these days." He then thanked me again most affectionately for all the assistance I had rendered him, in the pulpit and otherwise, during his long and painful illness, assured me that he had prayed for me, that the Lord would richly reward me for my labour of love, for he could not; and hoped that my life might be spared for many years to preach a full gospel; "and then," said he, "you will find the peace that it will produce in your own soul in departing moments—it will make a downy pillow on a dying day. What a mercy to have a clear conscience." He then asked kindly after Mrs. B., saying, "Give my dying love to your dear wife. Why did she not come with you? she knows that I am always glad to see her, and I shall soon be

gone; and when I am, oh! *tell it all out*, while I am singing of it before the throne of God and the Lamb. Our brotherly love has long existed unbroken and undiminished, but now the hand of death is about to separate us for ever in this world, but we *shall meet again, and never, no never, part*. What a mercy—is it not? I long to praise Him. I don't think it will be long first—do you?" I replied that I thought disease had nearly accomplished its work—that he would soon be at rest. Many other things were stated by him at intervals, respecting himself, his flock, and his dearly-beloved partner; *but as they were spoken in confidence, they are passed over in silence*. At this time several of his friends, who had called to inquire after his welfare, and were anxiously waiting below in the parlour, at his request entered his chamber; and, after a short interview, he wished me to close up the week at the family altar. This was truly a solemn scene. He was propped up in his bed with pillows, his hands clasped, and a holy serenity on his countenance, his dear wife on one side of the bed, and a dear friend, who was one of his earliest converts to the truth, while he laboured at Hoddesden, on the other, who had travelled many miles to see the last of her spiritual father, these, with his weeping friends, were kneeling around his dying bed. Surely those who were present will not soon forget the Saturday evening of March 27, 1852. It was very evident that the Lord of hosts was in our midst, and that each and all heartily joined in the short but solemn service; after which he took an affectionate leave of his dear friends, commending them to God and the word of His grace. Fearing that he would feel fatigued I again requested to withdraw, and he replied, "I am quite exhausted, and you have to preach to-morrow, so I will say good night, hoping that you may have also a good day on the morrow in dear Grove Chapel."

On Sabbath morning I saw him again. He had had a happy night, though in great pain, and there was a little inclination to *wander*. It was very evident that disease

was making rapid progress. He was truly a gigantic man, and there was much work for disease to do, in taking down his poor afflicted tabernacle. He appeared, for the moment, to have forgotten all his prior arrangements with me, and talked of dressing himself for the pulpit; but this was only for a few minutes (as one suddenly awaking out of sleep), and all was calm and serene as before. He was quite resigned to the will of God, and appeared truly happy in his soul. As he bid me "Good-bye," he said, "Dear brother, you will just look in as you go to the chapel in the evening, and be sure to give my dying love to the Church." I replied in the affirmative; but when I called, I found that he had just fallen asleep. I only remained a short time, and left for the chapel. After he awoke he appeared very happy, frequently using broken sentences, as if he was addressing the people of his charge; but the drowsiness was rapidly increasing. On the Monday morning I saw him again, but he was too ill to enter into conversation. The pains at this time were very great. On the afternoon of that day he appeared decidedly worse; and when I left him, I felt fully persuaded that the fears of his friends would soon be painfully realized. Twenty-four hours had made a great change in him for the worse. They informed me, when I called at bed-time, after I had returned from my own chapel, that he had spoken but very little since I had left him in the afternoon. He appeared as if he was in a sound sleep. Several times during Monday night, and early on Tuesday morning, he was perfectly sensible, and very happy in his mind; and at intervals repeated short portions of Scripture, and select sentences, such as, "How long, O Lord?"—"Come, Lord Jesus."—"I want to go home, to be at rest." Seeing his dear wife shedding tears, he said, "Do not weep for me. I am waiting for that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." After a pause to recover his breathing, added, "He that has preserved me thus far will never leave you, or ever forsake you. Fear not; all is well. Christ is precious;" adding,

“He was a shock of corn fully ripe.” He was so weak, that he could scarcely articulate; yet he spoke plain enough for any one who was close to his bed-side to clearly understand him. On another occasion, he said, in a feeble voice, “I, the Lord, do keep it.” After another pause, “Home, blessed home! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” It was very evident that various passages of Scripture were upon his mind, but he could not give utterance to them. Like Hannah of old, “only his lips moved”—there was scarcely any articulation. His placid appearance still continued; not a distorted muscle. Truly he had a holy, happy, heavenly countenance. “Glory begun below,” waiting on the confines of bliss till his summons should come, and the plaudit of “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of your Lord.” The fatigued labourer, at the close of the day, falling asleep, the pilgrim waiting for paradise, the holy warrior requesting to be enrolled on the muster-scroll of heaven, and receive his pension, *all of grace*. Thus the Lord was dealing with him very graciously, and gently taking down the poor tottering tabernacle.

On Wednesday, several of his family arrived from different parts, to receive his farewell benediction, and to take their leave of him they loved, for ever in this world; but the stupor was so fast increasing on him, that he could not clearly express himself, or accomplish that which they anticipated, and sought to obtain. At short intervals, it was quite certain that he was conscious; but he could not enter into conversation, even for the most limited period. The calm, celestial countenance continued, but the *heaving body*, and the *hard breathing*, told a very painful tale to those around him. It was too evident that his race was nearly run—his hours were numbered—that he would soon be freed from a body of sin and death—“be absent from the body, to be present with the Lord.” The medical attendant had already informed Mrs. Irons, that he thought his patient could not continue here much.

longer. All were, therefore, prepared for the worst. During Thursday and Friday, the same symptoms continued; therefore, nothing transpired of any moment respecting him. His friends were deeply affected, and were looking forward for the closing scene. He remained apparently the same; the stupor never abated, nor did his faculties return to him. On the Saturday night I had been with him for some considerable period, but thought he might remain in the body until the following morning; but at ten minutes past ten the same night his ransomed spirit took its flight for glory, without a sigh or a groan to denote the soul had made its exit from earth to everlasting day. I had just before squeezed his hand, and bid him "Good-bye;" and scarcely had I released it, before the pale messenger laid his chilly hand upon him, and all was perfect peace. The Spirit had fled to Him that gave it—to Him that loved him from all eternity, and washed him from all his pollution in the blood of Calvary; the ocean of time quitted for the shores of immortality—the full fruition of eternal bliss, to gaze on Jesus' face, without a veil between, and chaunt, in choral lays, to all eternity.

The *last* Saturday night, so long'd for, had come;

And his Lord gives command, "Call the lab'rer home!"

Fatigued with his toils, he casts off his attire;

His Master receives him, and gives him his hire.

Thus lived and thus died—nay, departed (for it cannot be called dying, a putting off mortality, and a putting on immortality,) one of the greatest champions for pure truth and Protestantism that has lived since the days of MARTIN LUTHER; for he might be justly styled the GOSPEL HERO of the day. He is not introduced as a perfect man—a sinless man—a faultless man; he often felt his own weakness, and mourned over his own failings; yet he was what he was by the grace of God. The agonies he endured were beyond description; but, blessed be God, the stupor which took place, without medical aid (*produced by congestion of the brain*), blunted the edge of disease to a wonderful

extent, so that for the last three or four days he was unconscious nearly the whole time. Thus the tabernacle was gently taken down, and folded up, while he was (apparently) in a sound sleep. What cause for gratitude, that the Lord thus dealt with him in departing moments. The Saturday night of time had come; and, after all the toils and labours of a long week were ended, he was ushered into the presence of the Prince of Peace, to spend a never-ending *Palm Sunday*. He had spent many very blessed Palm Sundays on earth, extolling a precious Christ, and singing "Hosanna to the Lord of glory." Yet surely none to equal this, the full fruition of eternal rest. He had very often, while preaching, led his audience (in spirit,) up to the pearly gates of the celestial city; but now he enters *himself*, and knows what glory means. Oh, the blessed exchange for him! all that was sinful and capable of suffering left behind—yea, consigned to the silent tomb, until "that day" when it shall be raised a glorious body, to be re-united to his soul. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord," he hears a voice from the throne, saying, while he is introduced to endless bliss, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter *thou* into the joy of thy Lord." But a short time before he departed, he said, "that he anticipated, *ere long*, joining the company of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and saints"—yea, many of those who had been new-born and benefitted under his ministry here—"but, above all (said he), the presence of Jesus, to be enjoyed perpetually." Blessed be God, more than he anticipated he now realizes before the throne of God and the Lamb; the music of ten thousand times, ten thousand saints, bursts upon his disembodied spirit, and the glories of the eternal world fill his soul with unspeakable delight. He now possesses all that Jehovah has to impart—all that his unfettered soul can enjoy. His pains, while living, often interrupted his happiness, and caused him to droop; but there disease and death are alike unknown; 'tis glory—perfect glory—perpetual bliss! Farewell, thou faithful servant of the living

God, until we meet thee with thy Lord, and join with thee in singing salvation's song. Thy toils are ended, thy conflicts o'er—thy preaching exchanged for perpetual praising; but thy long services here, will not soon be forgotten by thy *real friends*—by those who greatly loved thee while on earth, and were so frequently fed through thy instrumentality. Thy name is embalmed in many a heart; and while life's warm blood runs freely through their veins, thy name will continue to be precious to them, and thy memory be revered. Oft have they said, while listening to the sacred truths proclaimed by thee in dear Grove Chapel, under the power of the Spirit—

“Our willing souls would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing ourselves away
To everlasting bliss.”

It is written, “The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance;” “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me: Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” Ten thousand thanks to Jehovah for thy faithful services so long continued, and for thy extensive usefulness in the Church of God for so many years.

The departure of our dear friend and brother not taking place till nearly midnight on the Saturday, and many of the congregation residing at a distance, they were not aware of the solemn fact until they arrived at the chapel on the Lord's Day morning; but the news soon spread through their midst, and was received with a flood of tears by *those* who so highly valued his services, and then travelled, as if by electric telegraph, through the metropolis to the land's end, and across the swelling ocean to foreign shores, “THAT JOSEPH IRONS WAS NO MORE.” And while these few feeble lines are written, the intelligence is being wafted to our antipodes; for there are some in those remote parts who were greatly blest under his preaching, and to whom the printed sermons were

duly forwarded—for he was made a blessing, more or less, to the Church of God scattered over the whole earth; and many a heart will faint, and many an eye will weep, in distant lands, when the sad news is communicated to them, that our friend has finished his labours, and for ever vacated his pulpit; for, under God, they depended upon his preaching for their spiritual provision from time to time. For the gratifying of his friends, it was publicly announced that the mortal remains of the Rev. Joseph Irons might be viewed by the members of the Church and congregation between the hours of eleven and one on Monday and Tuesday, at his late residence in Grove Lane, adjoining the Chapel; and some hundreds availed themselves of the opportunity of so doing, and took the last look at him they dearly loved, and who had been made such a blessing to them for years. Those who could not attend at the stated time, were allowed admission privately up to Thursday afternoon, when he was finally soldered down on the evening of that day. It was also publicly announced that the day fixed for the funeral was Good Friday, at two o'clock in the afternoon. The friends were informed, that every accommodation would be afforded them, that the members of the Church and seat-holders would be admitted privately up to one p.m.; after that period the doors would be thrown open to the public. Every precaution was taken to prevent accident or confusion. The chapel was *densely thronged* with friends in deep mourning, long before the interment took place; and hundreds who were there at an early hour, were compelled to retire, being unable to get within the chapel gates, after they had anxiously waited for hours for that purpose. The pulpit-desk, &c., were hung with black cloth; and about half-past two o'clock, the remains were removed from his late dwelling to their last resting-place, in the following order:—Fourteen of his brother ministers, who were personally acquainted with the deceased, and who had been invited to attend the funeral, preceded the corpse, walking two and two; then followed the

massive coffin, containing all that was mortal of that truly great man of God, bearing the following inscription on the plate :—

“The Rev. JOSEPH IRONS, for Thirty-three Years Minister of Grove Chapel, Camberwell, in the County of Surrey; Born, Nov. 5, 1785; Died in peace, April 3, 1852—Aged 66 years.”

(Several members of the Church had requested that they might be allowed to act as bearers on the occasion, as a token of love and affection to their dear departed pastor, which was readily complied with, as far as practicable.) Then followed the affectionate widow, as chief mourner, two of the eldest sons and the daughters of the departed, then the relatives which were near of kin, and the four deacons of Grove Chapel, with several friends who were desirous of paying their last tribute of respect to the deceased, closed up the mournful train. The coffin was placed in a conspicuous part of the chapel, to afford the large congregation who were assembled on the occasion an opportunity of witnessing the same during the solemn service, which was truly impressive and appropriate; and among them were many of the brethren in the ministry. The Rev. W. Woodland, of Woolwich, commenced by giving out the 159th Song in Grove Chapel Book of Psalms. After the congregation had sung it, the Rev. Robert Taylor Hunt, of Camberwell, read the 39th Psalm, and the 5th chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, and then offered earnest prayer, imploring the Divine blessing to rest upon the assembly, who were brought together on that truly solemn occasion. At the conclusion of the prayer the Rev. Dr. Steane, of Camberwell, gave out the 483rd of Grove Chapel Hymns; at the close of which the Rev. Richard Luckin, of Woodbridge Chapel, addressed the assembly in a most affectionate and suitable way; and having concluded his remarks, the Rev. Thos. Bayfield, of Chelsea, gave out a hymn from Mr. Hart's Collection. While the congregation were singing, this the coffin was deposited in the *family vault under the pulpit* (which also contains the remains of Mr. Irons's first

wife and daughter) where he had so long and so successfully laboured in the work of the Lord. The Rev. T. W. Gittens then gave a short address to the friends present, at the close of which the 586th Hymn of Grove Chapel Hymns was given out by the Rev. C. D. Gawler, of Strood, Rochester. The solemn and impressive service was then finally closed by the Rev. Gabriel Bayfield, of Commercial Road East, London, offering the last prayer. At the conclusion the friends were invited to view the vault before they separated; and, although there were so many present, we are happy to say not the slightest accident occurred to any, and a profound silence was maintained during the long service. Funeral sermons were preached on the occasion by the following ministers, friends of the departed:—At Grove Chapel, by the Rev. Richard Luckin (at the request of our departed friend), from 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8; at Ebenezer Chapel, Camden Town, by the Rev. T. W. Gittens, from Phil. i. 20; at Bloomsbury Chapel, Commercial Road East, by the Rev. Gabriel Bayfield, from Phil. i. 21; at Union Chapel, Sloane Street, Chelsea, by the Rev. Thomas Bayfield, from Matt. xxv. 21; Union Chapel, Woolwich, by the Rev. William Woodland, from Matt. xxv. 21; and at the Tabernacle, Norwich, by the Rev. John J. J. Kempster, from Acts xx. 24; but as the whole of the Sermons and Funeral Service are in print, in the *Grove Chapel Pulpit*, it is unnecessary to go over the ground again by giving an outline of them, as they may be read entire in that work.

The loss that the living Church of God has sustained is heavy indeed. The sons of Zion may well weep and deplore their bereavement; while the formalists, Pharisees, and those who pride themselves in wearing the badge of bigotry, may rejoice that he is now no more; for he was constantly on the ramparts of Zion, exposing error of every description, and longing to raise the banner of the cross on the ruins of Antichrist. He was fearless of all consequences; that he could and did leave with his Divine Master, from whom he had received his com-

mission, with this injunction, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." I hesitate not to say, that if ever the Church of God had one minister more faithful than another, it was Joseph Irons, for he was firm, faithful, fluent, and fearless—active, anxious, and affectionate; and hear him where you might, or from what text, all the truth would be exhibited, and the gospel fully preached; for he could not *cut and trim to the times*; he was indeed no time-server, his faithfulness gave great offence to many whose creed and conduct would not bear the blaze of truth and the pointed appeals he made to conscience. Many hard speeches were used against him, but he remained unmoved as an iron pillar. As a man he had very tender feeling. He was an entire stranger to stoicism, and he often felt keenly the unkind and bitter treatment of those we should have hoped better things of; yet neither the fawning of one party, nor the frowns of the other, could shake his firmness. He would often say, "They called the Master of the house Beelzebub; no wonder that they should call them of His household by the same name." He gloried in proclaiming a full, free, and finished salvation. *Covenant love, covenant blood, and covenant grace* were his constant theme during *forty years* of his labours on earth. I heard a kind friend say of him, during his dying moments, "Mr. Irons is truly a great man, a wonderful man; and if he had obtained a college training what a giant he would have been; he would have then carried all before him." I replied, "Sir, Mr. Irons is a giant as it is; few, very few, can stand up to his shoulders in Divine things, for he is one deeply taught of God, and knows much of the anatomy of the human heart." He certainly was a man of great natural abilities, quick in thought, word, and work. He possessed a large share of originality; in every sermon he appeared as if he had told all out, and given you every idea he could muster; yet, hear him when you would, there was something new and savory, for he constantly brought forth "things new and old" out of

the heavenly treasury, for the building up of the Church of God. He has said, on several occasions, that some old divines, with whom he was acquainted in the early part of his ministerial career, used to caution him against this; telling him he ought to reserve some of his ideas for future discourses, or his usefulness would be very limited, and his discourses possess a great sameness. But he replied, stating, "Thank God, I obtain my materials from heaven; my Master knows what things I have need of, and having called me to the work He will not allow me to work alone. I get my sermons on my knees, with the word of God before my eyes; and if I empty my seed-basket to-day, I know that He will fill it for the morrow, therefore I will, God helping me, *tell it all out*. I cannot make a reserve, for it would be like a fire in my bones, burning its way out." He was ardently attached to his own people, and never felt so much at home, as when in his own pulpit; and it is very certain that all his *best sermons* were delivered there. When at home, he used very frequently to visit his chapel; to him it was a peaceful, private promenade, after the close confinement of his study (in which he spent so many hours every day); and many of the precious things which he brought from time to time before his people, were *put together* in that sacred edifice. By his constant visits, he became familiar with every pew and part of the chapel, upstairs and down. Surely no spots on earth were so dear or so frequented as the chapel and his study. He often held communion with God and fellowship with the Most High in that hallowed place. The very appellation, "Grove Chapel," appeared to have a peculiar charm, because God had so abundantly blessed his labours there; and he would never allow *any man* to occupy his pulpit, unless he had proof positive that his *creed* and conduct accorded with the word of God. He would never associate with any, unless he believed they were sincere in their profession, upright in their character, and who, by a holy life, would "strive to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Vulgarities he abo-

minated, while he always used great plainness of speech; for he considered the house of God and the service of God too sacred to be trifled with—it was the residence of Deity. Frequently he would say, “Tell me not so much how men *talk*, but let me know how they *walk*. I like walking Christians—*transparent* men—whose conduct will bear holding up to the light—those who say what they mean, and mean what they say—honest for God, holy in their lives, happy and useful in their work.” Those preachers who were continually dwelling on *inbred corruptions* and the *depravity* of old Adam nature, and employing coarse phraseology in the pulpit to express their sentiments, were very offensive to him. His motto was, “Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” He knew full well that the hungry children of the Lord’s family *could not feed on the exposure of human depravity; that Christ, the living bread, was the Christian’s food, and not corruptions*. That which the child of God mourns over in secret before the Lord, ought not to be brought before the public, to the outraging of the feelings of those who loved to live near to God. He often has said, “There was a great difference between preaching the experience of a Christian, and Christian experience. The former might set forth the depravity of a child of God—the latter, Christ in the soul the hope of glory.” He never carried a cloak to throw over those professors of religion who practised duplicity and chicanery. He loved uprightness, and said, “Where are we to look for it, if we do not in the professors of religion, especially preachers?” *He was just to a fraction*; he loved the apostolic injunction, “Owe no man anything.” He was a deadly enemy to Popery. Being born on the 5th of November, he invariably preached a sermon on his birthday against this God-insulting, soul-destroying, *dogma*; and in every prayer, public or private, wrestled with the Lord to overcome this monster—Popery. It was surely a joyful day to the Papists, when the news reached their ears that Joseph Irons was dead. May the many prayers that he has offered up to the Lord against the

man of sin, be answered by the covenant God of Israel. He was also staunchly opposed to Arminianism; and constantly waged war with the false doctrines of *old free-will*; but *grace—free grace—*was dear to his heart. He loved to expose all that was hateful to God, and all that was hurtful to man. As a pastor, he was affectionate and active, while he had the use of his faculties, “watching for souls as those who must give an account.” He was placed over a large Church (many of whom were called by grace under his ministry). 1,237 members had joined during his pastoral labours; they lived in his heart, and he ever studied their spiritual welfare. Every Monday morning, from nine to one o’clock, was set apart, at his own residence, for any to visit him on spiritual matters; and any proof given to him of their soul prosperity, always produced joy in his mind, and gratitude to God. He was, to all intents and purposes, one that watched for souls. The last night in the year he regularly set apart, for many years that are past, at his own house, from nine till after midnight, for special prayer and exhortation *for his spiritual children*, no others being invited (though not excluded), and called it “his family meeting.” Perhaps we cannot give a better epitome of his views of Divine truth, than we find in his own handwriting:—“Divine relationship is the basis of salvation, and the eternal union between Christ and His Church; is the sacred origin of all the blessings of redemption. The glorious covenant Head, and all the members of His mystical body, were constituted *One* in covenant enactments, by the ETERNAL THREE; so that the personal election of every vessel of mercy to everlasting life, proclaims the sovereign love of God the Father. The substitutionary responsibility of Christ for them all, reveals the betrothing love of Christ the Son; yea, the registration of all their names in the Book of Life, and the copying of that register into every regenerate soul, proves the saving love of God the Holy Ghost. From this grand first cause flows the forgiveness of sin, by the application of atoning blood. Justification, in the imputed righteousness of Christ—

sanctification, communicated in the Divine nature to the soul—perseverance, through invincible grace—and glorification, to consummate Divine union—all these blessings are infallibly sure to all the seed ; so that “no condemnation and no separation” are the heavenly watch-words of those who are in Christ Jesus ; while every doctrine in the word of God, every promise, and every precept, are seen to emanate from covenant love, as their centre, like so many rays from the sun, illuminating and warming the *whole elect world*, and reflecting the glory of the Triune Jehovah in a most conspicuous way.”

Surely, in the foregoing, we behold the very cream of the gospel—all that is essential and vital fully set forth in language truly biblical, and so clear, “that the wayfaring man, though a fool, could not err therein.” Mr. Irons both preached and wrote so plainly, that he was not only understood, but it was impossible to misunderstand him. The peace of the Church was long perpetuated, and great success was visible in their ranks. He writes—“Our established discipline has been the instrument of preserving our peace, while the Divine blessing has crowned the preached word with increasing success ; so that instances of saving conversion to God have been very numerous. Legal bonds have been exchanged for gospel liberty ; and some who once cherished a deeply-rooted prejudice against the place, the preacher, and the principles, have been induced to hear for themselves. Faith has come by hearing, extensive profit has been received by faith, and they have become the warmest friends, and the most useful members of the Church. Thus Jehovah has fulfilled His promise, ‘They shall come that were ready to perish.’ And there it stands, a majestic proof of the wisdom and faithfulness of God, and the fruit-bearing, hard-working tendency of those doctrines which are preached within its walls. Jehovah has been continually in our midst. What cause for gratitude ! while many sanctuaries have been closed, and Ichabod been written on the doors.”

The following letters which were written to a dear friend—one of his spiritual children—were unintentionally omitted, we therefore insert them before we close :—

To my own daughter after the common faith, grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour (Titus i. 4).

With pleasure I take up my pen to gratify your wishes, and to discharge my own duty; and as your present prosperity and eternal welfare lie near my heart, permit me to offer you a word of advice, relative to your Christian experience, and may the Great Head of the Church grant, that it may be of *real* benefit to you. You are situate in an enemy's country; an enemy whose service you have abandoned, whose name you abhor, whose yoke you are freed from, and whose very kingdom you wish to demolish: as such is your present position, do not consider yourself free from danger and molestation; but be constantly on your watch-tower, that you may not be annoyed by your spiritual foes unawares. To encourage you to think that you have no foes within your own bosom, would be flattery of the worst description—this, I am convinced, you are aware of; strive, therefore, in the first place, to suppress these traitors; let some part of every day be spent in examining their secret haunts, but never attempt the search alone, for they have many veils to throw over your eyes, and cloaks for themselves, whereby they will elude your observation, maintain their position, and much annoy your peace and comfort; take with you, therefore, a Friend who really loves you, in whom you can fully confide—a Friend who has a compassionate heart, an all-seeing eye, and an almighty arm—entreat Him to go foremost in the examination, say unto Him, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Follow Him closely in the search, and when you discover a traitor, entreat your Friend to exert His power, to dethrone and destroy him; and while you are pursuing this line of conduct towards your spiritual enemies within, do not forget the vast multitude that surround you without. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," says our best Friend; and every Christian proves the truth of this declaration experimentally. It will employ its frowns on the one hand to alarm you, and its smiles on the other hand to allure you—therefore, watch its motions minutely, and ever remember that its smiles are deceitful, and its frowns are only the frowns of an enemy; therefore, be not alarmed at the one, nor attracted by the other. If your Jesus were to frown upon you (that "Friend who sticketh closer than a brother") it might indeed

afford you matter of grief; but this you have no just ground to fear, so long as you are living near to Him. Listen to the sweet language of His word, and hear Him say, "I have loved *thee* with an everlasting love." His affection is as unchangeable as the throne on which He sits, therefore you may expect to eternally enjoy His smiles. Since, then, the frowns of the world are only the frowns of an enemy, be not dismayed at them; nay, I would advise you to prefer them to its smiles; for when it frowns, it appears in its true character, but when it smiles, it appears under disguise. Many are the instances which might be adduced to prove that Christians have lived safely, and enjoyed much spiritual prosperity, while the world has frowned upon them; when, on the other hand, its smiles have, in a great degree, alienated their affections, damped their fervour, and brought leanness into their souls—the smiles of the world are therefore more to be dreaded than its frowns. But fear not the world—it is a conquered foe—it has lost its power. Jesus has overcome it for you; and in Him you have peace; live above it, and encourage your heaven-born soul to take its flight daily on the wings of faith to survey the Paradise of God. But permit me, dear friend, to give you a word of advice and caution with respect to your fellow-travellers to Zion; do not expect to find all your wishes fully realized in them; for although you may reasonably look for some sweet communion with them (and I trust that you will not find yourself altogether disappointed), yet you will sometimes find that their conversation will discourage you, their conduct will grieve you, and in some instances you may even be the object of envy; but allow me to advise you in such cases to cherish as much of the Spirit of our Divine Master as possible; whenever they discourage you, like David of old, "encourage yourself in the Lord your God;" His covenant and promise are a never-failing source of "strong consolation," from whence you may always obtain encouragement. Whenever you are grieved by them, flee to the throne of grace for redress—acquaint your heavenly Father with all your sorrows, and never fear the character of a TELL-TALE; for our covenant God and Father loves to hear His children's complaints, and redress their grievances. And whenever you are the object of envy, let Christian meekness and brotherly love be called forth into exercise to quench the raging fire; in a word, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." If you can but obtain the happy art of ruling yourself, you will find all other difficulties prostrate at your feet; and you will have nothing to do but to gather them up, and carry them to your Divine Burden-bearer, who will take them on His own shoulders, and carry them into oblivion. Suffer the word of exhortation while I remind you, that you may expect to be attacked frequently

respecting many of your religious opinions, both by religious and profane persons. Therefore, that you may "be always ready to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason, of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear," I would further advise you to read *much*; pray *much*, and commune with your own heart *much*, and endeavour to obtain a steady fixedness of principle; for "it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." Therefore, be firm, but not obstinate; be teachable, but not fickle; never adopt any sentiment, but upon the fullest conviction of its being consonant with the word of God, nor ever be persuaded to renounce any sentiment you have so embraced, without equal evidence of its fallacy; and whenever any new difficulty presents itself to your view, I pray you first consult the "Wonderful Counsellor," and then seek the advice of Christian friends. Jesus has promised His Holy Spirit to teach you all things. Oh! listen to His instructions, and then you shall not be a *dul scholar*. And as long as I am an inhabitant of this clay tabernacle, it will always be a pleasure to me to use the small talent which God has endowed me with, to explain any part of His word, or to solve any difficulty for you. And now, my dear friend, permit me to congratulate you upon the wisdom of your choice, and the nature of your prospects. Like Mary, of old, you have "chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from you." You have riches more valuable than the treasures of the universe, which will never make to themselves wings and fly away. You have a Friend, whose affections can never be warped by intrigues, alienated by devices, nor changed even by your own inconstancy; *for whom He once loves, He loves even to the end*. Moreover, you have enjoyments, which as far surpass the best pleasures (falsely so called) of the worldling, as the meridian blaze of the sun exceeds the glimmering of the taper. Methinks I hear you say, Can all this be mine? I gladly answer, Yes; "all things are yours; for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's;" and your prospect is truly delightful. You may expect, ere long, to be met by a convoy of angels, who, in obedience to the mandate of our heavenly Father, shall conduct you safely into the presence of Him who redeemed you, whom you love, and who shall feed you with the green pasture of Paradise, lead you to living fountains of water, and wipe away all tears from your eyes.

Thus God the FATHER has decreed;
 For this thy Jesus deigned to bleed;
 To this the SPIRIT seals thy soul;
 Who can the ETERNAL THREE control?

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height,

nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Wherefore, gird up the loins up your mind, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ." "Finally, beloved, pray for me." May the God of all grace bless you with every needful blessing, both for time and eternity. So prays

Your affectionate and faithful Pastor and Friend,

JOSEPH IRONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

At your request, I give you my opinion of the fulness of gospel truth contained in that blessed portion of Holy Writ, John x. 27, 28. These words present to our view two leading particulars; first, a description of the character of real Christians; their nature sheep, in which notice their purity of disposition, appetite, and association, their exposure to foes of various sorts, which is much increased by their own weakness; their protection, the covenant of grace, is their fold, and God is their Shepherd (Ps. xxiii. 1); their value and usefulness (2 Kings iii. 4). Then look at their privilege. They hear Christ's voice. This is a voice of mercy—a voice of direction—a voice of reproof—a voice of acknowledgment—a voice of comfort, and a voice of protection. Then notice that this voice is heard by Christ's sheep with inexpressible delight—overflowing gratitude—humility of heart—powerful attraction, heartfelt satisfaction, and with unfeigned obedience. Then you will observe their practice. It is said, they *follow Him*. First, look at the road they travel. 'Tis exceedingly rough, very narrow, quite safe, perfectly clean, and leads in a straight direction to heaven. Do not forget the qualification of their Shepherd who leads them. *He* is wise to instruct them, powerful to defend them, affectionate to succour them, and constant in His affection and attention to them. Dear friend, just look at the act of following; 'tis voluntary, 'tis persevering; it is profitable (John viii. 12). Now turn for a few moments to glance at their true blessedness—their state in Christ's hand. How pleasant to be in the hand of a kind Friend, an affectionate Brother, a tender Parent, an indulgent God! It is a dignified state to be in the hand of the King of kings. "Such honour have all the saints." It is a safe state to be in the same hand that supports heaven and earth—an almighty hand. Then look at their Portion—*eternal life*. This is, indeed, a noble portion, consisting of pleasures here, and glory hereafter; a life of enjoyment—a durable portion, "eternal life." And all this is freely bestowed—"I give." Before I close, just glance at their security. "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." This is confirmed by the impotency of our enemies, by the potency of our

Friend, the unchangeableness of His love, and the honour of His name. Then it follows, that those who are not in Christ's hand must perish beneath His hand; for all must bow to Him. Thus, dear friend, I trust that you will see the truth and the beauty contained in the passage; and believe me to be, very affectionately,

Your Father and Friend,
JOSEPH IRONS.

Shepherd's Tent, Feb. 26, 1850.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I cannot refuse your request for a line or two, though I am not in a fit state to write—I am in such agitation, both of body and mind. Indeed, I am a standing miracle to myself. Among other sharp trials, I have just parted with dear S——, I suppose for life—perhaps for ever! Pray for me, my dear friend. He is gone to * * * * These dreadful attacks, often brought on by the agitating scenes I pass through, sometimes make me weary of my existence; but God has hitherto made all grace to abound toward me; and though the trial of my faith is sharp and long, I know that my blessed Master prays for me, that my “faith fail not,” and enables me to glorify Him, even in the fires. He is still carrying on His work gloriously in Grove Chapel, and I expect to receive eleven more members on Friday evening, *seven of whom are my spiritual children*. You, my dear friend, have my tenderest sympathies and prayers. I bless the Lord for supporting you these *many years* in the wilderness. Still cling to Him, confide in Him, and wait for Him. Come, my dear friend, to the Grove and Tent as soon as you can.

Ever yours, &c.,

J. IRONS.

During the ministry of Mr. Irons, some laudable societies were formed, and warmly supported. The “Home Missionary Society” originated at Grove Chapel; its first missionary was a member of the Church, and its first prayer-meeting held within its walls; and the pastor was a life-subscriber to the Society. They also have a Sabbath School belonging to the chapel; a “Sympathetic Society,” for visiting the sick poor at their own habitations, reading the Bible and relieving their wants; a “Dorcas Society,” for assisting poor married women in the time of trouble; a “Card Tract Society;” a large Sacramental Fund,

and an auxiliary to the "Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society," of London. About £100 per annum was subscribed to this Society alone, independent of all the others. Thus the love and liberality of the flock was conspicuous; and it was evident that the Lord was in their midst. He laboured hard to maintain the discipline unbroken; and said but a short time before his departure, "I feel fully persuaded, by long experience, that our order is Scriptural, and the peace of the Church has been perpetuated thereby; and after I am gone, if they once attempt to break down the fence that has been kept up so long, the peace and prosperity of dear Grove Chapel will be at an end, the thoughts of which pierce me to the very heart. May God prevent it; or, I think, it will call up my ashes from the dust as a witness against them. May peace be within her walls."

It is very evident that the future prosperity of Grove Chapel was much upon his mind. It cost him many prayers, and many tears, lest, after his removal to glory, the doctrines which he had so boldly set forth for so many years in their midst should be sullied, and another gospel introduced; and the discipline so dear to his heart be disregarded, and something inferior substituted for it. He had seen other causes broken up, through neglect and mismanagement; and, therefore, he trembled for his own place, lest the barque should be wrecked on the sands of discord, and share a similar fate to others he had met with, after he was safely landed on the shores of immortality, where discord and confusion are unknown, and where the Prince of peace resides perpetually.

A FEW FRAGMENTS,

GATHERED BY THE HAND OF FAITH, THROUGH THE INSTRUMENTALITY
OF OUR DEPARTED FRIEND.

"WHEN the Holy Ghost applies the blood of atonement to the conscience, and enables the soul, by faith, to appropriate the righteousness of Christ as his own, then the perfections of Deity wear no terror, because the law

is fulfilled, and has no curse. Justice is satisfied, and has sheathed his sword; reconciliation is effected for the Church by the blood of the cross, which faith accepts with joy; so that the soul is brought into perfect agreement with God upon the plan of salvation, and realizes sweet communion with Him, through Jesus Christ, as the God of peace, and the believer is brought into holy intimacy with all the Persons and perfections of Deity."—"As Jesus redeemed both the bodies and souls of His people, He will ultimately have both glorified with Himself, and in the enjoyment of Himself; so that the grave, which is viewed with such revolting feelings *by the flesh*, is viewed by faith as the crucible in which the Lord refines the baser part, that at the resurrection morn it may come forth like Christ's glorified body."—"The union between Christ and His Church is the grand first cause of all the life and fruitfulness of true believers, by which their full justification, sanctification, and glorification, are produced and secured; they are partakers of His holiness."—"Christ's ministers are not priests, but stewards of the mysteries of God, and faithful dispensers of the word of life, spending their lives to exalt Christ, and proclaiming a full salvation in His name; gathering in the elect of God, and feeding the hungry of His family with the pure wheat—with Christ, the living bread."—"God's ministers are called labourers. Now the very term implies that there is hard work for them to perform. Labourers must expect fatigue, both of body and mind; and whether they expect it or not, it will come upon them. If they are working in the Lord's service, the poor body will be sometimes so worn down as scarcely to be able to reach its place of nightly repose, and the mind so burdened, disappointed, and exhausted, as to complain, like Moses, 'The burden of this people is too great for me.'"—"It is the peculiar privilege of the Christian to commit all his affairs to Christ, as his covenant Head; and he will get no peace in his soul till he has done so. There must be confidence in Him."—"We are not only amazed and grieved by the open avowal of erroneous principles, and the awful *diluting*, and trimming, and putting in ambiguous terms of the things of God, but to come to practice, where, I ask, is practical godliness to be found? Not a few who may have received the precious doctrines of God's eternal grace are so wedded to the world, that it would not do to follow them closely for half-a-dozen steps in any one day of their lives. Their spirit, their walk, their very manner of transacting business, their associations, their worldly-mindedness, their carnal pursuits, all leave us to ask, Where is the godliness of such men? Where is the proof that they belong to the Lord?"—"God's people essentially differ from the world in their life; for their life is hid with Christ in God. Their life is a life of faith in the Son of God. It is supernatural; yea, it is a life of holy intimacy with God. It is a life that

is fed from the throne of God. It is a life that is given by the hand of God. It is a life that is instructed by the Spirit of God. It is a life that has been redeemed by the Son of God. It is a life that is destined to spend an eternity with God. Now the world, with all its religion, knows nothing of this; it is a perfect stranger to it. Thus God's people are wholly distinct from the world, whether professor or profane. Theirs is a blessed life—elevated, dignified, superior to earth, intimate with heaven, ministered to by angels, trained up for glory, and shortly to be translated there.”——“The best repentance which is known on earth is that which flows from Calvary—from atoning blood—from pardoning love in the contrite soul, sweetly satisfied that his sins are cast behind Jehovah's back. He feels incapable of pouring out, in sufficient profusion, his expressions of gratitude and love for pardoning love, applied by power Divine. He waits, he looks, and weeps at the feet of Jesus. This is the effect of genuine repentance in the soul, sorrow for sin, and a seeking of Divine forgiveness of the Lord.”

In concluding this memoir, the writer feels painfully that it is not in his power to do justice to the history of his departed friend, which he exceedingly regrets. Fain would he have erected a noble monument to his memory, which should be as lasting as time, and as conspicuous as the orb of day; setting forth most fully his gigantic powers, and his great usefulness, that the Church of God, in days to come, might read his history, and revere his name, and try to follow him as far as he followed Christ. Although he cannot describe him correctly, yet he trusts that the few feeble hints which have been thrown out respecting his friend, will be the means of perpetuating his memory in the hearts of thousands of the Lord's dear family; that those who knew him not, may be able to form an opinion of his character, and trace in this mere outline, the lineaments of “a faithful minister of Christ,” and give the Lord the glory; for he was what he was, “by the grace of God.” And those who knew him well, in whose hearts he will be long embalmed, will be best able to make up that which (to every intelligent and impartial reader,) is evidently deficient. Many of those who have taken up their lodging in LAODICEA, or

seeking change of scenery in the vicinity of ATHENS, will, doubtless, exclaim, "Too much has been said concerning him by his biographer;" while the *Diotrephes's* of the day will endeavour to expunge much from his history that was valuable, and try hard to throw down the monumental pillar that we have been endeavouring to erect to his sacred memory. But the noble BEREANS among the blood-bought, grace-taught family of the Most High God, who were favoured to listen to the gracious words which proceeded from his lips, will cheerfully and gratefully accept the little that has been penned as a token of Christian affection, while they cry out, with the Queen of the South, "The half has not been told!" For he was a splendid specimen of what the grace of God can accomplish in the hearts of poor sinners. He loved to sing—

"Oh, to grace how great a debtor!"

Dear friends, see how the grace of God was magnified, both in his life and in his death! Finally, what has been written in the form of a memoir, has been advanced with a desire to glorify a precious Christ, and to endeavour to permanently preserve the history of one of His dear servants. Moreover, it has been compiled with a sincere heart, in simple language, with a trembling hand, and oft with weeping eyes; and if it should call forth from some who may peruse these pages, the exclamation of the Jews of old, at the grave of Lazarus, "Behold, how he loved him!" the compiler does not intend to put in a plea of "Not guilty" to the charge; for it amounts to such in the opinion of some, "who love only in word, but not in deed." His grand object has been to present the Church of God with a small token of real heartfelt affection to his departed father and friend, whose society and counsel he was so long favoured with. Praying that it may be made a lasting blessing to the Zion of our God in days to come, that the widow's heart may be cheered thereby amidst the many discouragements she meets with, and a thousand blessings, both temporal and spiritual, rest upon

her during her short stay in this unfriendly vale of tears, until she shall join her late beloved partner in the realms of bliss, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest," and where parting scenes shall be for ever unknown. That the Church at Grove Chapel may give some splendid proof of the sincerity of their love by their liberality and kindness to *her*, who so richly deserves it at their hands, and that Jehovah would raise up another faithful pastor after His own heart, "to feed the people with knowledge and understanding;" another bold champion for the truth, as it is in Jesus; one that shall maintain the same *doctrines, without alloy*—the same *discipline, without the least deviation therefrom*—and be equally zealous for God, and as successful in winning souls to Christ, as dear JOSEPH IRONS was. Yea, may the Church ever prove the sincerity of their love to their late pastor, by carrying out, in *creed* and *conduct*, that which was so constantly and affectionately presented to their view, till within a few days of his departure for glory. THEN THEIR SUCCESS IS CERTAIN; and God, even our God, shall be glorified thereby.

Farewell, thou honest, happy, holy, faithful servant of the living God! Thy labours are now at an end, thy toils are over, and thou art gone home to receive thy rich reward—ALL OF GRACE, and realize more than thy faith could anticipate while here. Farewell, again we say, until the morning of the resurrection. Then may the writer and the reader of these pages, meet *thee* before the throne of God, to gaze on Jesu's face, yea, to see Him as He is, without a veil between; and while we cast our blood-bought crowns at His dear feet, and drink at the fountain-head of bliss, absorbed in covenant love, we will chaunt and sing, to all eternity, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen." HALLELUJAH!

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